

THE
Devout Christian's Companion
FOR
HOLY-DAYS;
OR
Pious Reflections and Aspirations

ON

The GOSPELS for the Festivals of our blessed
LORD, and Saints Days of Obligation
throughout the Year, and on some Particular
Days of Devotion, and the Moveable Feasts.

To which is prefixed,

A brief Account of the respective Festivals and
Saints on those Days honoured by the Church.

WITH

A PREFACE, setting the Catholic Church's
Doctrine of honouring the Saints in a true
Light, and the same justified from Scripture
and Antiquity.

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THE SECOND EDITION:

LONDON:

Printed for and sold by T. MEIGHAN, in *Drury-Lane*; and J. COGHLAN in *Duke-Street*, near
Grosvenor-Square. MDCCLXV.



P R E F A C E.

THE Design of the following Work is to furnish devout Christians with proper spiritual Entertainments on Holidays, to help them the better to keep the Feasts appointed by the Church, in Honour of the great Mysteries of our Redemption by *Jesus Christ*; and in Honour of the holy Apostles, Martyrs, and Saints of God, whose Memories have always been had in the greatest Veneration, and whose Festivals have been observed in the Church from the most early Ages, particularly from the Time of its glorious Establishment, and when it became triumphant over Paganism and Idolatry, and the whole World confessed *Jesus Christ* to be the Son of God, by embracing his holy Gospel; from which Time the Church thro' all succeeding Ages has had her Calendar of Saints, and

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Days appointed to be kept holy to their Honour, and in their Memory. On which Days the Faithful assembled together at the public Service of the Church to praise God in his Saints, and for the Graces he bestowed upon them on Earth, and for the Glory with which he has crowned them in Heaven, that by commemorating their great and glorious Actions we might be stirred up with a holy Emulation to copy after their Example, and like them to love and serve God with Zeal and Fervour, and for this to beg their holy Prayers and Intercessions. This is the End for which the Church, guided and directed by the holy Spirit of God, has instituted these Festivals and appointed Holidays; from which it is evident they should be sanctified and kept holy, as the Church directs. To be present at the public Service on these Days is certainly a Duty to which we are obliged, and to hear Mass and abstain from servile Works or Labour on these Days is observing the Precept of the Church according to the Letter of it; but to keep them according to her Spirit and Intention, something more is required, that

that is, to give Part of our Time more than ordinary to Prayer, spiritual Reading, meditating on the serious Truths of Religion, or to read and reflect on the Lives of those holy Saints whose Festivals we celebrate. Such pious reading and reflecting will help us to raise up our Hearts to God, to inflame our Souls with noble and just Affections of Love, Gratitude, Praise and Thanksgiving to him, and strongly move our Wills to make pious and sincere Resolutions of loving and serving him. It is by thus honouring God and his Saints, and thus observing Festivals we may hope to reap that spiritual Fruit and Advantage these holy Institutions are designed to procure to our Souls. It is in this Light the serious Christian will look upon the Festivals and Holidays appointed by the Church, and endeavour devoutly to observe them. Here it may be proper to take notice, that neither the Institution of Holidays, or keeping them, are Points of Faith, but are Matters which purely belong to the Discipline of the Church, and both as to their Institution and Manner of keeping them are to be prescribed by her

chief Pastor and Prelates to whom it belongs to regulate every thing of this Kind, that all Things may be done decently and in Order, and for the greater Edification of the Faithful, Circumstances of Times and Places duly considered. Hence we find that in all Ages of the Church its Discipline in this, as well as in other Parts, has been various and different in particular Churches, and that without any the least Detriment to, or Breach of that Unity by which all the Members of the catholic Church are united under one Head in the Profession of one and the same Faith, and Participation of all and the same Sacraments: This Variety in Discipline greatly adds to the spiritual Beauty of the holy Spouse of *Christ*, his Catholic Church. Consequently to this it is to be observed that Festivals, as to their Number, the Time of their Institution and the Manner of their Observation has been different in different Ages. As the Institution of Festivals and their Number at different Times gradually increased and were approved by the chief Pastor and Prelates; so for good Reasons, they have several

P R E F A C E.

v

veral Times been diminished, and particularly of late by the same Authority ; and as to the Holidays now to be observed, with regard to that Part of the Church's Precept prohibiting servile Works and Labour on them, Circumstances of Times considered, justly authorise some Dispensations to poor labouring People, working Men, and those who are obliged to attend Trade and Business, from the unavoidable Connection they thereby have with those who dissent from the Doctrine and Practice of the catholic Church in this Point. Yet such ought to know and remember what are Holidays and what are not, and devoutly to hear Mass on those Days, if possible they can, nor will it be any great Hindrance or Detriment to their Business, in the Morning, or some Time of the Day, to read some short pious Lesson relating to the Holiday or Saint whose Feast is kept. The devout Tradesman who thus endeavours to sanctify these Days, may hope for God's Blessing upon himself and his Undertakings, and while he labours according to the Order of God for this World, may, at the same Time,

be labouring for Heaven. Those on whom the kind Hand of Providence has bestowed Affluence and Plenty, who, exempt from Trade and Business, are Masters of their own Time, it is to be hoped they will not think much to give some Part of their Time to God, by religiously observing the Days consecrated to his Service, and the good of their Souls. Gratitude seems likewise to require of them to suspend on those Days, some otherwise innocent Pleasures and Amusements, and for which they have so much Leisure, that they may entertain themselves with the serious and holy Exercises of Religion, and thereby testify a just and religious Sense of God's Goodness to them; the only secure Method to preserve their Minds from that gross Inattention to the Soul's Welfare; but too, too common at present in all States and Conditions of Men. The World and its Pleasures are but too apt to captivate our Affections and engross our Attentions and draw us off from the necessary Care we ought to have of our Souls, nor can there be any Thing better to preserve us from the bad Consequences of this Carelessness, than

than sometimes seriously to reflect on the sacred Truths of that holy Religion we profess; and what Time can be more proper for these Reflections than those Days on which the Mysteries of our Redemption are celebrated, and the Saints of God honoured and revered? And were it not for the Institution and Observance of Holidays, it is to be feared the very Knowledge of those holy Mysteries would be, in a Manner, lost among Christians, of whom too many seem to know little more of them than their Names. However, this may seem to bear hard upon those who profess to believe the holy Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, the Conduct of too many in this Point, affords a full though melancholy Proof of it, and will justify what is here said from any Censure of Harshness and Exaggeration.

Nevertheless there are many pious and good Christians who, amidst the Business and Occupations of this Life, are sincerely desirous to mind the *unum necessarium*, the Salvation of their Souls, and are willing to embrace every Help that may be offered them to succeed in this truly important

Affair. Such will esteem the Festivals and Holidays of the Church, as Times wisely designed for their spiritual Profit and Advantage, and consequently be both willing and careful to observe them as they ought. To these good and devout Christians these Sheets are particularly offered; wherein, after an Account of the respective Holidays, and their Institution, and a brief Relation of the Saint whose Feast is kept, follows the Gospel of the Day, with some moral Reflections on the practical Truths therein contained. To which are added some pious Aspirations to help the devout Soul to raise itself up to God, and express its Desire of loving and serving him, and to beg the Prayers and Intercession of the Saints we honour, for that End.

But, is not to pray to Saints, or to beg their Prayers and Intercessions an unlawful and unwarrantable Practice, robbing God of his Honour, and injurious to the all-sufficient Mediatorship of *Jesus Christ*? I am sensible the Church's Doctrine has been thus represented and cried down by her Adversaries; and great Pains have been taken to represent it in this Light with all
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the Exaggeration, Interest, and a mistaken Zeal could suggest. And I think the best Answer to the Question, will be to shew the true Doctrine of the Church in this Point, by a fair and just Representation of it, whereby it will appear that what the Church teaches in this Respect is no ways unlawful nor unwarrantable, that it is quite the Reverse of what it is represented to be, and consequently that nothing but unreasonable Prejudice or Ignorance can make Writers persist in urging so false and unjust a Charge, and to calumniate the far greatest Part of Christendom by branding Roman Catholics with the impious and odious Name of Idolatry. What the Doctrine of the Church is, we shall best learn from herself, and not from the Misrepresentations of others. Let us hear then the Church speaking and declaring herself on this Point in the Council of Trent: *that the Saints who reign with Jesus Christ, offer up their Prayers for Men; that it is good and profitable to invoke them in an humble Manner, and to have Recourse to their Prayers, Aid and Assistance, to obtain of God his Benefits through our Lord Jesus*

Christ *his Son, who alone is our Saviour and Redeemer.* Conc. Trid. Sefs 25.

This is what the Church here publickly declares to be her Doctrine; and this is all she requires of her Children, to believe, that it is good and profitable to invoke the Saints, and to beg their Prayers and Intercessions for Blessings we desire to obtain of God, and this thro' his Son *Jesus Christ*, who is here acknowledged to be, as he is, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Nothing but Prejudice or Ignorance can say this is denying the All-sufficiency of *Christ's* Merits, or putting the Merits of the Saints upon a Level with his. Much less can this import what some lay to the Charge of Catholics, that they are taught to have more Confidence in the Merits of the Saints, than in those of our blessed Saviour, or that we thought the Merits of *Christ* were not sufficient without those of the Saints. This is a great Mistake, a very gross Misrepresentation of the Church's Doctrine, and what was never asserted by any Catholic Divine or Controvertist. We are taught and we profess that the Merits of *Jesus Christ* our Saviour
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are alone all-sufficient for the Satisfaction of our Sins, for to obtain Grace here and Glory hereafter, all which we hope for by and through his Merits only. Nevertheless, as all must allow, these Merits of *Christ* are not so applied to us, as to exempt us from certain Conditions which we are to perform. There are certain Qualifications required on our Parts in order to be saved by his Merits: We must keep his Commandments, we must abstain from Sin, and when we fall into Sin we must sincerely repent, humbly confess, and beg pardon for the same; and when we consider our own Unworthiness, and how much Reason we have to fear from thence, it will be a sufficient Motive not only to justify our begging the Intercession of the Saints, but also to excite us to it, not as if God could not grant us the Favours we ask without their Intercession, but that he may be moved by their Prayers for us, to grant what perhaps for our Unworthiness he would otherwise deny.

Further; we may, and ought to take notice that the Church in this Decree of the

the Council of Trent does not say, nor do any Divines teach that the Intercessions of the Saints are absolutely necessary; they are not made a necessary Condition of our being heard by God, or of obtaining our Request. They are only here said to be good and profitable; and though not absolutely necessary, yet not to be slighted, or contemned, much less condemned as unlawful. All the Means beneficial to Salvation, or any other good End, may not be absolutely necessary to all, as some may attain such End without some of those Means; yet in respect of Particulars, some, by omitting them, may lose the End or may not possess it in the same Perfection as they might have done by the Use of them, and therefore the Use of all such Means is to be recommended to all. We may go to Heaven, tho' we never fast, if we are justly dispensed from fasting, yet no good Christian will say it is useless, or not at all profitable to fast in a Spirit of Penance and Sorrow for our Sins, and much less that it is unlawful so to do. It is certain every Man may have immediate Recourse to God by
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his own pious and devout Prayers, and obtain what he asks for through the Merits of *Jesus Christ*, without the Prayers of others; but this is no Hindrance or Reason why he should not ask the Prayers of holy Men upon Earth, or desire the Saints in Heaven to join in Prayer for him. The Apostle St. *James* Chap. v. Ver. 16. says, The Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much. And if the Prayers of holy Men, while upon Earth, are so prevalent with God, we may reasonably conclude they are much more so now they are reigning with him in Heaven; that therefore it is good and profitable humbly to beg their Intercession, which is the whole of the Church's Doctrine in this Point, and can no ways be said to be derogatory to the all-sufficient Merits of *Christ*, or injurious to his sole Mediatorship of Redemption; it is very far from having greater Confidence in the Saints than in him our only Saviour and Redeemer. An Outcry that can be looked upon only as the Effect of very great and unreasonable Prejudice, or very great Ignorance

norance; more to be pitied than seriously answered.

But do not Catholics go further than what is here asserted? Are not their Addresses to the Saints apparently by the Words of them of a different Nature than barely to desire them to pray for us? No. Whatever Terms may be found or Manner of Expression in the public Offices of the Church, they amount to no more, nor signify any Thing farther than *Holy Mary, pray for us. Saint Peter, pray for us.* And all Catholic Writers unanimously declare this to be the Sense of the Litanies and Prayers to the Saints. As for the Collects in the Missal and Breviary they are always terminated with *per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum. Through our Lord Jesus Christ.* A plain and full Declaration that we ask for nothing but through *Jesus Christ*, and for his Merits. It appears, therefore, not only unreasonable, but also highly unjust to refuse the Church's Explication of her Doctrine, and to force upon her another which she declares against, and all Catholics disclaim. It is certainly unreasonable and unjust not to allow

allow the Church Liberty to explain her own Meaning in the public service she uses. The same may be said of any Prayers or Petitions to Saints, to be found in Books of private Devotion, nor does the Church ever approve of any private Devotions to Saints, which go beyond the Limits she prescribes. As for any exotic and out of the way Prayers composed by private Persons according to their own private Fancies, the Church does not justify them, nor are the Excesses of such Devotees, if any there are, to be charged upon her, who does not teach or encourage us to have Recourse to Angels and Saints as conferring Benefits upon us by their own proper Virtue or Power, for considered in the most exalted Station, and highest Degree of Grace and Glory, they are but pure Creatures, nor does the Church look upon them any more than as Intercessors dear to God, and powerful with him in our Regard by their Prayers for us; and as such we may lawfully and profitably have Recourse to them, and beg of them to pray for us, expecting at the same Time what we ask, through

through and by the Merits of *Jesus Christ*. Let Prejudice, therefore, be laid aside, and the Matter be impartially considered, and then not only the Innocency but the Lawfulness also of desiring the Saints to pray to God for us will soon appear.

The Innocency and Lawfulness of the Church's Doctrine and Practice in this Point may be further justified from Scripture and Antiquity. And first it is nowhere forbid in Scripture from the first Chapter of *Genesis* to the last of the Revelation: It is nowhere said in the Word of God that it is sinful and unlawful to desire the Saints to pray for us. Had there been any such Prohibition in Scripture, no reasonable or equitable Person can think the Church could be ignorant of it, or be so far led into Error, as to recommend that for useful and profitable, which is by the Word of God forbid. The Passages of Scripture generally cited and urged against the Invocation of Saints are visibly forced by wrong Interpretations, and no ways touch the Point in Dispute. Thus that of *Isaias* Chap. 63. Ver. 16. *Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant*

ignorant of us, and Israel knoweth us not. The most that can be made of this, and what it properly means is, that *Abraham* was ignorant of the then State of the *Jews*, and it is to be considered that this is said of *Abraham* before the Coming and Ascension of our Saviour, when the Souls of the holy Patriarchs, according to the common Judgment of Antiquity, were not admitted into Heaven, which they only attained, when *Christ* by his Death and Passion had opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers. In like Manner is wrong interpreted and vainly urged what St. *Paul* says, *Coloss. Chap. ii. Ver. 18. Let no one seduce you, affecting in Humility and the Worship of Angels.* What the Apostle here says is only against some false Doctors among the *Colossians* who had introduced an undue and superstitious Worship of Angels, and gave them a greater Honour than to *Christ*. They honoured and worshipped them as joint Creators of the World and necessary Mediators with God, even above *Jesus Christ*, which St. *Paul* clearly intimates by these Words following, *not retaining*
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the Head. But this is neither the Church's Doctrine nor Practice. We worship only God with divine Worship, to be given to no Angel, Saint, or any Creature, how noble and excellent soever, and this is what we instruct our Youth in, when we teach them their Catechism. It is further urged that the Angel forbid St. *John* to fall down and adore him, *Rev.* Chap. xxii. but this can only mean a Prohibition of any divine Honour or Adoration, nothing of which the Church requires or teaches, we should give to Saints or Angels; and these Texts of Scripture may as well be cited to forbid us to pray for one another, or to desire good Men upon Earth to pray for us, as to say they forbid us to desire the Angels and Saints to pray for us; to say further that we have no Command in Scripture to pray to Saints by begging their Intercession, and that nothing ought to be practised but what is expressly commanded by the Word of God: This I must beg leave to call very weak Reasoning, and to which it may be replied, if nothing at all in the Church's Practice is to be observed but what is ordered *Termini-*

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nis expressis, in Scripture, Protestants, especially those of the Church of *England*, are obliged to lay aside many Things which they practise. If they think it sufficient, as it is, to say to the Dissenters from them, such Things are not forbid, they are in themselves innocent, and may be of great Use and Benefit to the People; why shall it not be allowed to the Catholic Church to make the same reasonable Plea? It is no where forbid in Scripture to desire the Saints to pray for us. In many Places of Scripture the Prayers of Saints and holy Men upon Earth are desired, and God oftentimes confers Blessings on others for the Prayers of such; with what Reason then can desiring the Intercession of Saints in Heaven, or begging their Prayers be condemned as contrary to God's Word, or forbid by it?

That the Angels and Saints pray to God for us, seems pretty evident from *Zacharias*, Chap. i. Verse 12. And the Angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of Hosts, *how long wilt thou not have Mercy on Jerusalem, and on the Cities of Judah, with which thou hast been angry?*

angry? And St. Paul says, 1 Cor. Chap. xiii. Verse 8. *Charity never ceaseth.* If Charity obliges us to be solicitous and to pray for one another's Salvation, can we reasonably imagine the Saints in Heaven, whose perfect Charity is many Degrees superiour to ours, are not solicitous at the Throne of Grace for us their Fellow Members, who are combating in this mortal Life, and uncertain of our future State? St. John, Rev. Chap. v. Verse 8. speaks of the Prayers of the Saints: *The four-and-twenty Elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them Lamps, and golden Vials full of Odours, which are the Prayers of the Saints.* Another Angel came, and stood before the Altar, having a golden Censer; and much Incense was given to him, that he might give of the Prayers of all the Saints upon the golden Altar, which is before the Throne of God. And the Smoak of the Incense of the Prayers of the Saints ascended up before God from the Hand of the Angels. Rev. Chap. viii. Verse 3, 4. See also St. Matthew, Chap. xviii. Verse 10. St. Luke, Chap. xv. Verse 10. These Texts of Scripture are sufficient to
justify

justify the Church's Doctrine and Practice in this Point.

What were the Sentiments of Antiquity, or the Antient Fathers with regard to this, will appear from the following Citations of some of them who lived in the early Ages of the Church, and when Protestants confess the Church to have been pure and uncorrupt.

1. *Origen*, who lived in the third Century, in his first Sermon on *Ezekiel*, has this Prayer, *Come, O Angel, receive one converted from his ancient Error*. In another Place he says, *Who doubts, but all the Saints do help us by their Prayers, and encourage us by their Example?* In Numb. xxxi. ex Interpretatione et Collectione Ruffini.

2. *St. Gregory Nyssen*, in the fourth Age, thus addresses himself to *St. Theodore*, Martyr; "Intercede for your Country
" with our common Lord and King. As
" a Soldier, fight for us; as a Martyr,
" use the Liberty of speaking in Be-
" half of your Fellow Servants." *Orat. de S. Theod. Mart. T. iii P. 585.*

3. *St.*

3. St. *Chrysostome*, in his Sermon upon the holy Martyrs, *Domnæ Berenice* and *Prosdice*, thus exhorts the People; “ Let
 “ us go to their Tombs, not only on the
 “ Day of their Feast, but on other Days
 “ also. Let us beseech them to be our
 “ Protectresses, for their Power is great;
 “ not only when living, but also and much
 “ more, when dead; for now they bear
 “ the Marks of *Christ*, and when they
 “ shew these, they may obtain all Things
 “ from the King.” *Tom. 1. Edit. Par.*
 1636. P. 570.

4. St. *Ambrose*, *Lib. de Viduis*. “ Our
 “ Angel Guardians are to be invoked,
 “ the Martyrs are to be invoked, to whose
 “ Patronage we seem to have a Claim,
 “ by possessing their Relicks.”

5. St. *Augustine* says; “ ’Tis the Prac-
 “ tice of the Church, which the Faithful
 “ know, that when the Martyrs are nam-
 “ ed at the Altar, we pray not for them,
 “ though we pray for the other Souls de-
 “ parted, whom we name, for it is an
 “ Injury to a Martyr to pray for him, to
 “ whose Prayers we ought to commend
 “ ourselves

“ ourselves.” Serm. clix. §. 1. *olim* 17.
de Verb. Apost.

More Passages might be brought ; but these are abundantly sufficient to give us the Sense of Antiquity, and what were the Sentiments of the Primitive Fathers as to begging the Intercession of the Saints ; which many learned Protestant Divines grant to be very innocent, and also very ancient in the Church.

Dr. *Montagu*, Bishop of *Norwich*, owns it is no Injury to *Christ's* Mediatorship to desire the Saints to pray for us. “ I grant, “ says he, *Christ* is not wronged in his “ Mediation ; it is no Impiety to say as “ they (*Roman Catholics*) do ; holy *Mary*, “ pray for me, holy *Peter*, pray for me.” *Treat. of Invoc. of Saints*, P. 118.

Mr. *Thorndike*, *Epil. Part* iii. Page 353. “ To dispute whether we are bound to honour the Saints or not, were to dispute whether we are to be Christians, and whether this be religious or civil, nothing but the Equivocation of Words makes it disputable, and the Cause of that Equivocation the Want of Words.” This learned Protestant, in the same Work, P. 321. tells

tells us, that the Lights both of the Greek and Latin Church, *Basil, Nazienen, Nyssen, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostome*, both *Cyrils, Theodoret, Fulgentius, St. Gregory the Great, Leo*; more, or rather all after that Time, have spoken to the Saints, and desired their Assistance.

Bishop *Forbes* confesses that Litanies have been sung for many Ages in the universal Church, both *East and West*, and by the *Muscovites* in the *North*, in this Form, *St. Peter*, pray for us. *De Invoc. Sanct. P. 321.* he says likewise, *that it is a most dangerous Thing to despise or condemn what has the Consent of the whole universal Church*, *ibid. P. 326.*

The Bishop of *Oxford*, in his Edition of *St. Cyprian*, *P. 271.* we do not doubt, says he, *but the Souls in Heaven pray earnestly to God, that he may shew his Mercy to those who live here.*

The Concessions of these learned Protestants is a full Vindication of Catholics, to which I will add, and conclude this Preface, that it is a dangerous and unwarrantable Thing to misrepresent and calumniate the Spouse of *Christ*, his holy Catholic

P R E F A C E.

xxv

Catholic Church, the devout Members of which may, and undoubtedly will, find it good and profitable, to desire the Saints to pray for them, and to religiously observe their Holy-days, according to the Spirit of the Church, to whose Judgement and that of my Superiors the following Essays on the Festivals are humbly and entirely submitted by

P. B. O. S. F.

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THE
Devout Christian's Companion
FOR
HOLY DAYS.

JANUARY I.

The Circumcision of our Lord J. C.

AND

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

THE Feast of the Circumcision of our blessed Saviour *Jesus Christ* is of an early Date in the Church. The second Council of *Tours* held in the Year 567. *Can. 17.* as mentioned by Father *Thomassin* in his Treatise of the Feasts of the Church, regulated after what Manner it should then be observed, and by saying they only renewed the Ordinances of the antient Fathers concerning it, shew evidently that it had been kept in the Church long before, and jointly with the Octave of the Nativity, the Day on which, according to St. *Luke*, Chap. ii. our blessed Lord was circumcised. Hence, in the *Roman Martyrology*, it is stiled the Feast of the Circumcision, and the Octave

of the Nativity. As it is the Octave Day of *Christ's* Birth, the Office is of the Nativity, and as it is the Day wherein he was circumcised, the Mass is of the Circumcision, and the Gospel is taken from that Part of *St. Luke* wherein it is related that when eight Days were accomplished he was circumcised; and we are to observe that it is the Gospel which properly distinguishes the Masses and Feasts which are celebrated, and acquaints us with the Mysteries we honour: And it is from the Gospel of this Day, that it is called the Feast of the Circumcision, instituted in a grateful Remembrance of *Christ's* submitting to the Law of Circumcision, and first shedding his sacred Blood for us, and at which Time likewise was given to him the holy and adorable Name *Jesus*, or Saviour, that by his Name he might signify his Design to redeem and save us from our Sins. That we may reap the Fruit of this Redemption, let us endeavour to keep this Feast according to this Spirit and Intention of the Church. And seriously attend to the excellent and useful Lessons she reads to us from the Gospel of the Day, that we may make them the Rule of our Conduct.

The GOSPEL. St. Luke Chap. ii. Ver. 21.

And after eight Days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised; his Name was called *J E S U S*, as he was named by the Angel, before he was conceived in the Womb.

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From this Gospel we are informed how our blessed Saviour, a few Days after his holy Birth of the blessed Virgin, was pleased to be circumcised, and shed his sacred Infant Blood as an Earnest of his shedding it afterwards in a fuller Manner, even to the last Drop on the Cross, to satisfy for our Sins, and purchase our Redemption. The proper Considerations for this Festival are seriously to reflect upon the Humility and Obedience of *Jesus Christ*, and his great Love to us poor miserable Sinners, and from these Reflections to be stirred up to make him a suitable Return for his Love, by sincerely loving him again, and to shew the Sincerity of our Love by imitating the Example he has given us of Obedience and Humility. *I have given you an Example*, says he to his Disciples, *that as I have done, so you do also*, St. *John* Chap. xiii. Ver. 15. What an admirable Example of Humility do we here behold in the Person of *Jesus Christ*! The Law of Circumcision was a painful ceremonious Law established by God, and first given to the Patriarch *Abraham*, and afterwards commanded to the *Jews* under a strict Obligation. It was designed as a Mark whereby the *Jews* might be distinguished from all other Nations; and as a Seal of that Covenant which God made with them, that they should be his People, and he would be their God. To them

it was also the Remedy for original Sin, and whereby the Guilt of it was blotted out. How great then must be the Humility of *Jesus Christ* to submit to this painful and humbling Ceremony! to submit to a Law which seemed to put him upon the Level with those Sinners he came to redeem, but could be of no Force or Obligation in his Regard, who as Man, had no Sin, and as God, was the sovereign Legislator and Giver of that Law to the *Jews*. Here we may observe how, even in his Infancy he began to teach, by his own holy Example, that great and necessary Virtue of Humility which afterwards he so much recommended to all his Disciples and Followers in his divine and admirable Discourses, his significant and instructive Miracles. As Christians we are his Disciples, and as such, are strictly bound to follow his Example and observe his Precepts: But, can we say we do this, when our Hearts are full of Pride and Ambition? When we cannot bear even the Thoughts of any Thing that may humble us in the Opinion and Esteem of others? Let us learn from the Mystery of this Day's Festival a better Spirit, and enter into Sentiments more suitable to Followers of the holy and humble *Jesus*, whose Gospel we profess to believe.

Our blessed Lord in his divine Sermon on the Mount told the *Jews* that he came not to destroy the Law of the Prophets, but to fulfil and perfect them as to all moral Obligations; and as to the ceremonial Part of the Law, while

while it was in Force he was very exact in the Observance of it, and therefore in Obedience to that Law, submitted to the Precept which enjoined every Male-Child among the *Jews* to be circumcised eight Days after it was born. Instructive Lesson of Obedience here given to us. An Obedience prompt, entire and ready. No Excuses made: No Exemptions pleaded. Not as God, the Giver of the Law for Men, himself no Ways subject to it. Not as Man born without any Spot or Stain of Sin, consequently no ways wanting any Remedy for Sin. But as he came into the World to establish a pure and holy Religion teaching us to obey God and all lawful Superiors, he would give us an Example in his own sacred Person of that Obedience we are to give to all the Commands of God, and those he has placed over us. And as Obedience for God's Sake is highly pleasing to him; so Disobedience is extremely offensive to him, so far as holy Scripture tells us, that *Obedience is better than Sacrifices: and to hearken rather than to offer the Fat of Rams: because it is like the Sin of Witchcraft to rebel: and like the Crime of Idolatry to refuse to obey.* 1 Kings, Chap. xv. Ver. 22, 23. If we desire to shew ourselves good Christians, true Disciples of *Christ*, we must pay an exact Obedience to the Laws of God, and Commands of lawful Superiors; and as Obedience is a good Proof of our being humble, so Humility will make us always ready to obey.

As *Jesus Christ* not only observed the moral but also the ceremonial Part of the Law while it was in Force. By this we are taught and instructed to observe not only the moral Precepts of our holy christian Religion, but also as Members of his catholic Church, to obey all her Precepts, and with an humble Spirit of sincere Piety, to observe all her holy Institutions, neither murmuring at them, or without just Cause seeking to be dispensed from them, as too many do. The Church is our spiritual Mother, we are her Children, and she consults our spiritual Good in all her pious Injunctions, her holy Feasts and Fasts, and the good Christian will without Difficulty comply, and religiously observe them, nor can we better imitate the Example of *Christ*, than by readily obeying his Spouse the Church, of the Pastors of which, he has said: *He who hears you hears me; and he who despises you despises me.* St. Luke Chap. x. Ver. 16. From these Considerations let us resolve on all Occasions to shew ourselves truly humble, and in all Things to be obedient to the Law of God, and to his Church, and all our lawful Superiors.

We further learn from this Day's Mystery, that as *Jesus Christ* was circumcised for us we must also be circumcised for him by a spiritual Circumcision, or a cutting off all inordinate Desires, all immoderate and unlawful Passions, all Attachment to, and Fondness for the Things of this World; its Honours Riches and Pleasures,

fures, and also all Self-Love, all which are our greatest and most dangerous Enemies. We must circumcise not only the inward, but also the outward Man in our exteriour Senses, which, too often, prove Occasions of offending God. Hence we must refrain our Eyes from dangerous Objects, our Ears from hearkening to immodest Discourses, Detraction and censuring others. Our Taste from Intemperance and Excess; our Tongue from all Lying, Swearing, Cursing, or any unbeseeming Language; from all Flattery, Dissimulation and speaking ill of others, and what may serve to sow Discord and Contention. We must circumcise and cut off every Thing that is contrary to the Law of God, by putting off the old Man, and putting on the new. Lastly, we should cut off some of our Superfluities as to the Things of this World, by giving them to the poor and those who are in want. If we cannot find in our Hearts to part with something out of our Abundance to assist those who are in Necessity, can we think we shall ever be willing to shed our Blood, or lose our Lives for *Christ*? And yet this we must do, if ever called to the Trial, under pain of being disowned and rejected by him. Let us therefore, now circumcise ourselves by Works of Penance, Mortification and Self-denial, by Alms-Deeds and Charity to the Poor. In doing this we shall truly honour *Jesus Christ* in his Circumcision, and from him receive the

Recompence of our Obedience and Fidelity to him our divine Master.

In order to this we may consider that this is the first Day of the new Year, wherein we are called upon to begin to lead new Lives, and to consecrate this Beginning of the Year to God, who mercifully waits for our Amendment, allowing us Time and Opportunity of improving in Virtue, and proposes Heaven for our Encouragement and Reward, and which he will most assuredly bestow upon us, if through our own Fault we do not deprive ourselves of it. Let us reflect how swiftly Time runs on. One Day follows another, one Week another, and one Year succeeds another. We have seen an End of the last Year, and are come to the Beginning of a new one. This shews us, that as we have so much less Time to live, we have so much more to give an Account of, and that to a Master who will call us to a severe Account, and exact from us a strict Reckoning; for tho' he is infinitely good and merciful, and allows us Time and Opportunity to work out our Salvation, and spares us Year after Year, yet he will one Day call upon us to shew what Use we have made of this Time; whether we have improved our Talent, and are ready to return the expected Interest.

Time may be truly called the Talent which our great Master has committed to our Charge, not to be squandered away in Sin and Folly, but to be employed in that Business of Importance,

portance, the Saving our Souls, and securing to ourselves a happy Eternity. How many who were alive and well at the Beginning of the last Year, are now no more, notwithstanding their Hopes of many Years. Death has cut them off, and that we are not of the Number is owing to the Goodness of God, who has mercifully spared us, and allows us further Time to prepare ourselves. How many who enter upon this new Year in perfect Health, appearing in all the Vigour and Strength of Youth and Manhood, will not see the End of the Year, perhaps not half, or a few Months. Whether this may not be our Lot we cannot tell. This Reflection ought to make us careful to make a good Use of our present Time, and to follow the Advice of St. Paul; *Brethren, while we have Time, let us do good.* Gal. Chap. vi. Ver. 6. Let us then begin this new Year with new Resolutions to love and serve God; and dedicate ourselves entirely to his Service.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O *Jefus*, my dear and adorable Redeemer! How does thy Mercy and Goodness to us poor Sinners appear in this sacred Mystery of thy Circumcision! Ah Lord! thou seemest impatient to suffer for us. O divine and charming Infant! Why dost thou so soon begin to feel the sad Effects of our Sins! Didst thou not come to shed thy sacred Blood upon the Cross? Why

Why then must it be shed in thy tender Infancy? It is Love for us, dear *Jesus*! that thus makes thee to suffer; and as soon as thou art come into the World, thou wouldst give us a Proof of thy Love by suffering. Ah my Soul! What returns can we make for so much Goodness and Mercy? See how the Son of God humbles himself to a rigorous and painful Law, that he might suffer for us; and to teach us Lessons of Humility and Obedience.

O *Jesus*, my sacred and divine Master! may I be willing to learn these Lessons of thee? Can I be proud, when I see thee thus humble? Shall I refuse, or be unwilling to obey, when I see thee thus obedient for my Sake? Can I repine or murmur at Sufferings when I behold thee shedding thy precious Infant Blood for me? Can I be cold and insensible and not love thee, when I behold thee enduring so much for Love of me? O my God! I am ashamed and confounded to think how little sensible I am of thy Love. O *Jesus*, warm my cold and frozen Heart, and make it burn with Love and Affection for thee.

And now, O my God, with a deep Sense of thy great Mercy and Goodness to me, with all possible Sincerity, I humbly give thee Thanks for all the Favours and Blessings thou hast so liberally conferred upon me, as my Creation, Redemption, Sanctification and Preservation, and many others contained in them, and flowing from them. I give thee Thanks for preserving me from many Dangers to which I have been
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JESUS CHRIST. *Jan. 1.* II

been exposed, for mercifully sparing me Day after Day, and bringing me to the Beginning of this new Year, graciously allowing me a little more Time to amend my life and to serve thee. Every Moment of my Time is a Monument of Mercy. May every Moment of it for the future be spent to thy Honour and Glory, and may I begin with this new Year to serve thee with new Zeal and Fervour? My God! I offer up to thee all that I am and have, my Heart, my Body and my Soul, my Thoughts, my Words, and my Actions, my Memory, Will and Understanding, my whole Interior and Exterior. All which I consecrate to thy holy Service. I renew all my good Purposes and Resolutions, and resolve by the Assistance of thy Grace to love and serve thee better than hitherto I have done. I resolve to serve thee henceforward most faithfully, to adhere to thee most firmly, to hearken to thy divine Calls, to obey thy holy Inspirations, finally, to love thee only, always, and above all Things. But as I can do nothing of myself, and without thee, assist me with thy Grace, confirm and strengthen me in these my good Purposes, that I may this Day begin to love and serve thee as I ought, for hitherto, alas! I have done nothing. *Amen, sweet Jesus, Amen.*

JANUARY 6.

The EPIPHANY.

THE Feast of the Epiphany has always been esteemed one of the greatest in the Church, and, as such, celebrated with extraordinary Solemnity and Devotion, and is still observed as a Holiday of the first Rank. Its Institution is of early Date, and it is one of the most antient of all the Festivals; and whenever the holy Fathers speak of the Feasts observed by Christians, they always mention the Epiphany as one of the most solemn. St. *Chrysostome*, as cited by Father *Tomassin*, calls it the first and chief of the Christian Solemnities, and in several of the *Eastern Churches*, the Nativity of *Christ* used to be comprehended in it, and celebrated on this Day. By many antient Writers it is called the Day of Holy Lights, from the great Number of lighted Candles and Tapers which were put up not only in the Churches but also without, more particularly in the *East*, to signify and represent the glorious Light of the Gospel spread thro' all the Earth, by the Coming of *Jesus Christ* to enlighten the World with the Knowledge of him the one true God, and promised Messias, or Saviour of Mankind.

The Mysteries which the Church celebrates on this Feast, are 1st. The Manifestation of *Jesus* to the *Gentiles*, by the coming of the
three

The Epiphany. Jan. 6.

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three Kings from the *East* to adore him. 2dly, His Baptism in the River *Jordan*, and the Manifestation of him then by his eternal Father. 3dly, his changing Water into Wine at the Marriage of *Cana* in *Galilee*, where he manifested his Glory, and his Disciples believed in him. These three Manifestations we learn from Tradition, were made on the same Day of the Year, and are therefore celebrated together on this Festival. The Hymn which the Church uses in her Office this Day, and wherein these Mysteries are represented with the greatest Beauty and Elegance of Expression, is a Proof of this Tradition, and was composed by *Prudentius*, the christian Poet, before the End of the fourth Age. To celebrate this great Festival as we ought, we must thank God for manifesting himself to us, by calling us to the Knowledge of the true Faith. We must adore *Jesus Christ* as the wise Men did, and offer him Gold by giving Alms; Frankincense by Prayer and Devotion, and Myrrh by Mortification and Self-Denial. We are also to beg Pardon for the many Times we have neglected God's holy Calls and Inspirations, and resolve for the future to obey and follow his divine Calls, and beg his Grace that we may do so; and lastly, pray for all those who remain in the Darknes of Vice, Error, and Infidelity.

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The GOSPEL. St Matthew Chap. ii. Ver. i.

When *Jefus*, therefore, was born in *Bethlehem* of *Judfa* in the Days of King *Herod*, behold there came wise Men from the *East* to *Jerusalem*. 2. Saying, where is he that is born King of the *Jews*? for we have seen his Star in the *East*, and are come to adore him. 3. And King *Herod* hearing this, was troubled, and all *Jerusalem* with him. 4. And assembling together all the chief Priests and the Scribes of the People, he enquired of them where *Christ* should be born. 5. But they said to him, in *Bethlehem* of *Judfa*. For so it is written by the Prophet. 9. And thou *Bethlehem* of *Judfa* art not the least among the Princes of *Judfa*: For out of thee shall come forth the Captain that shall rule my People *Israel*. 7. Then *Herod* privately calling the Wise-Men, learned diligently of them the Time of the Star which appeared to them. 8. And sending them to *Bethlehem*, said, Go, and diligently enquire after the Child; and when you have found him, bring me Word again, that I also may come and adore him. 9. Who having heard the King, went their Way, and behold the Star which they had seen, went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. 10. And seeing the Star they rejoiced with exceeding great Joy. 11. And entering into the House, they found the Child with *Mary* his Mother, and falling down they adored

adored him ; and opening their Treasures, they offered him Gifts; Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. 12. And being admonished in Sleep, that they should not return to *Herod*, they went back another Way into their own Country.

REFLECTIONS.

The Saviour of the World being born of the blessed Virgin *Mary*, his Birth was proclaimed to the *Jews* by an Angel, who appeared to the Shepherds of *Bethlehem*, and his Nativity was made known to the Gentiles, by the Appearance of an extraordinary Star in the *East* to the wise Men, or Princes of that Country, by which they knew, that then was born the promised Ruler of the Universe. This Knowledge they wisely improved, and obeying this Call from Heaven, immediately left their Country to seek him, by the Guidance of that Star, in order when found to adore him. How great was the Faith and Courage of these *Eastern* Princes! How great their Faith! They no sooner beheld the Star, but they were satisfied; they believed what it signified, and hastened to adore the new-born Redeemer of the World. How generous and noble their Courage! Without any Concern or Anxiety for their own domestic Affairs, without any Fear or Apprehension for their own Persons, they leave their Kingdoms, and boldly travel into a strange Land, and in the Capital of a Prince jealous and cruel, a Stranger to them

them, enquire after a new-born King. They openly declare their Business, and the Reason of their coming to *Jerusalem*; saying, *Where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to adore him?* What excellent Lessons are here given us in the Conduct of these holy Men! We are taught by their Example to believe whatever God reveals, and to be obedient to his divine Calls. When he is pleased to manifest his Will, and call us to his Service, we must readily obey, and not seek to draw Excuses from Wordly Considerations to hinder our Compliance. We must boldly own the Cause of God, whether it be by openly professing the true Faith in Opposition to the Enemies of it, or by shewing ourselves Followers of *Jesus Christ*, and those who seek him in the Way of the Gospel, by living strictly up to its holy Maxims, in Opposition to the Ways of the World, an Enemy to Christ, and Usurper of his Kingdom. No temporal Motives, no Apprehension of what the World will say, no Fear of Danger to our Fortunes, Persons, or even our Lives, must hinder us from seeking *Jesus* in the Profession of the true Faith, and shewing ourselves Christians, not in Name only, but in Reality, by living up to the holy Religion we profess, and therein imitate the Faith and Courage of these *Eastern* Princes. In order to which, let us often and seriously think on what our blessed Saviour has positively told us in his sacred Word: *Every one that shall*

shall confess me before Men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in Heaven. But he who shall deny me before Men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in Heaven, S. Matt. Chap. x. Ver. 32. 33. Not every one who saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father, who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, St. Matt. Chap. vii. Ver. 21. From these Words of Jesus Christ it is plain, there are two Ways of confessing Christ, both which the Christian is to observe, that hopes to be saved. We must not be ashamed or afraid to own our Christian Catholic Faith; and we must confess and adorn that Faith by holy and exemplary Lives.

The Wise Men being dismissed by King *Herod*, and leaving him to enquire after the new-born *Jesus*, the Star appeared to them again, and went before them till it came and stood over where the Child was, and they knowing what it meant, entered the House, and found the Child with *Mary* his Mother; and falling down, they adored him. They were not scandalized at the Poverty of his Parents, nor the low and mean Condition wherein they found this King of *Israel*. With a lively Faith with profound Humility and sincere Devotion, they prostrated themselves at his sacred Feet, and offered him their Gifts, Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. They did not appear before him empty-handed, or with a dry sterile Devotion; they opened their Treasures,
and

and laid them before him, and at the same Time offered to him their Hearts, acknowledging him to be King, God, and Man. As King they offered him Gold, a Tribute due to his Regal Power; Frankincense to him as God, and offered him Myrrh, a Present signifying him to be Man.

The moral Instructions here given us, and which deserve our serious Attention, are, that when we approach to God in Prayer, we must do it with great Humility, Reverence and Devotion. We must prostrate ourselves before him Body and Soul, and confess him to be our King, God and Man, our Saviour and Redeemer; offering to him our Gifts, by Alms-deeds to the Poor, therein paying him Tribute, and acknowledging him to be our Sovereign Lord and King. We must offer him daily the sweet-smelling Frankincense of Prayer and Praises for all his Mercies to us, and thereby confess him to be God, our great Creator, in whom we live, by whom we move, and have our Being, from whom we have received all that we have, and from whom we are to expect all that we hope. As he became Man, that he might die for us, we are spiritually to die for him; we are to die to the World, to all sinful Attachments to it; we are to die to ourselves, that is to all sinful Passions, all inordinate Inclinations, and by Self-denial, Mortification, and doing Penance, present him with Myrrh. These are the Instructions given us in this Day's holy Festival. Happy those Christians,

Christians, who, entering into the Spirit of the Church, do thus endeavour to observe it. Unhappy those who satisfy themselves with some external Shew of Devotion, by being present at the Church Offices, and mind no further. Still more unhappy those who profane these Solemnities by unwarrantable or criminal Liberties and Excess.

ASPIRATIONS.

O *Jesus*, my Saviour! touch my Heart with an interior Ray of thy holy Grace, illuminate my Understanding, and inflame my Will, that with these holy Men I may believe in thee, seek thee, and happily find thee. Thou hast said, dear Lord, *seek and ye shall find*. I desire to seek thee, sweetest *Jesus*! I desire to seek thee with a firm Faith, an humble Love, and constant Diligence. Thus may I seek thee, till I find thee, and when found, may I never more lose thee, nor be separated from thee.

Thou didst call these Princes to thee, O divine Light, by the Brightness of a material Star, and at the same didst incite them by an interior Motion of thy Grace, to seek after thee, and didst guide them to find thee, and didst instruct them to know and adore thee as their Sovereign Lord and their God. It was there that they lost, O that I may do so too! all Earthly Thoughts, that their Desires were elevated, and that thou didst begin in them, as by the first Fruits of the Gentiles, to take Possession

Possession of those Souls thou camest to seek upon Earth.

O *Jesus*, my God! I adore thee! I adore thy divine Majesty thus veiled under an Infant's Form, and abridged in so low, so small a Shape. I offer thee, O Lord! my Gifts likewise, my Heart, my Body, and my Soul; my Memory, Will and Understanding, all that I am and have, all which I consecrate to thy holy Service.

F E A S T of the Holy Name J E S U S.

N. B. *When this Feast was first instituted, it was assigned to be kept on the 14th Day of January, but has since been made a moveable Festival, and fixed to the second Sunday after the Epiphany.*

THE Church, ever mindful of the Favours she has received from her Divine Spouse, and desirous to testify a grateful Acknowledgment and Remembrance of them, has instituted this Festival, in Honour of the most holy and adorable Name *Jesus*. A profound Veneration for which she desires to inspire into all her Children, that they should honour and respect this sacred Name. A Name above every Name, *Phil.* Chap. ii. and to which all pious Christians have ever been devout. The Excellencies of this holy Name, the Virtues and Graces contained in it are admirably and with great

great Piety and Devotion set forth by the mellifluous S. *Bernard*, Sermon. 10. *Super Cant.* Sermon. 1. *De Circum.* The Devotion to this sacred Name, as well as their Duty to God, was in a miserable Manner forgot and neglected by wicked and careless Christians, when S. *Bernardine* of *Sinna*, a religious Man of the holy Order of S. *Francis*, who died in the Year 1444, moved with great Zeal for the Glory of God, and desirous to reclaim Christians from their evil Ways, went up and down the Cities of *Italy*, preaching Repentance and Amendment of Life, and endeavouring to revive in the Hearts of Christians a Devotion to this sacred Name *Jesus*. God was pleased to give a Blessing to his Endeavours. Many Thousands were converted, and Christians began again to reverence and respect the adorable Name of their Saviour. To maintain which Piety, and to render it universal, this Festival was instituted, and the Church desires, that on this Day we should, in a particular Manner, shew our Devotion to the Name of *Jesus*, and to consider him as our Saviour and Redeemer, the Source of all spiritual Blessings, by the Love and Service of whom we shall be happy, and find him a Saviour to us.

The GOSPEL. St. *Luke*, Chap. ii. Ver. 21.

And after eight Days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised; his Name
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was called JESUS, as he was named by the Angel before he was conceived in the Womb.

REFLECTIONS.

Thou shalt call his Name JESUS, for he shall save his People from their Sins. S. Matt. Chap. i. Ver. 21. This holy Name signifies a Saviour, and which our blessed Lord would take upon him, that by his Name he might declare his gracious Design of being our Redeemer. The Prophet *Isaias* had heretofore given him the Names of *Emanuel, or God with us; Admirable, the Angel of the Great Council, the Prince of Peace, and the Father of Future Ages*, with many others; all which are comprized in this sacred and adorable Name *Jesus*, of which they are so many Explications, for to be truly a Saviour, it was necessary he should have a Desire to draw us from the Power of the Devil, and to rescue us from the Slavery of Sin. That he should be a God conversant with us, the Master and Teacher of a most sublime and holy Law, thereby to dissipate the Darknes of our Errors, and enlighten our Minds by the Knowledge of his heavenly Truths. To make Peace between Heaven and Earth. To be the Father of eternal Life. To open the Gates of Heaven, where all his Elect and chosen Ones might reign with him through all future Ages in a happy Eternity. For these Reasons he would be called *Jesus*, or Saviour. This is that sacred Name, terrible to the Devils,

vils, glorious in the World, adorable in Heaven, sweet and charming to the Just, comfortable to Sinners, our Surety in all Dangers, our Rest in Labour, our Succour in Distress, our Hope in this our Pilgrimage, our Support in all our Fears, our Consolation in Trouble, the Source of all our Good, and Remedy of all our Evils. What Love and Bounty in *Christ*, to become Man, and to take this sweet and comfortable Name! What Returns ought we to make of reciprocal Love and Affection to him!

As Christians redeemed by the Blood of Jesus, and to be saved by this sacred Name, we ought to have great Devotion to it. This Devotion must be both internal and external. It must be rooted in our Hearts, and expressed by our outward Actions and Words. We must have in our Hearts a very great Affection for Jesus and his holy Name; and this Affection must be wrought in us by serious Reflections on his great Love to us. In order to this we should frequently meditate on what he has done for us; that thereby we may kindle the Fire of divine Love in our Breasts. Ah, Christians! can we so often hear of his Love, of what he has done for us, and remain cold and indifferent? Can we read or hear this holy Name, and our Hearts not burn with Love of this gracious Redeemer and Saviour? Can we have any Devotion to this holy Name of Jesus, and not outwardly express it by always pronouncing it with Reverence and Respect? Is it

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not the Name of Jesus Christ, who is God himself, who has expressly forbid all taking his Name in vain? Hence how are they to be condemned, who so often take this holy Name in vain, in common Conversation, and upon every trivial Occasion? Have not such Reason to apprehend and fear, that instead of finding him a Jesus, or Saviour, they will one Day have him a severe Judge to condemn and to punish them for all their Profanations of his sacred Name?

Further, we should seriously consider that as we acknowledge Jesus to be the Saviour of the World, and hope to be saved by him, so we must be careful that these Hopes are grounded upon a virtuous and holy Life, otherwise we shall find ourselves sadly deceived. He himself has declared that *not every one that says Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that does the Will of his Father who is in Heaven.* St. Matthew Chap. vii. Ver. 21. What the Will of God is, St. Paul thus declares: *The Grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all Men, instructing us that, derying Ungodliness, and worldly Desires, we should live soberly and justly, and godly in this World, looking for the blessed Hope and coming of the Glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Ep. ad Tit. Chap. ii. Here is our Duty clearly laid down, and it is upon these Terms only we can hope to find Jesus a Saviour to us: It is thus we are principally to honour his sacred Name. He came into the World of his own
free

free Bounty and Good-will to save us, but he requires something on our Parts in order to be saved by him, namely, that we keep his Commands, and observe the Precepts of his holy Gospel which we profess to believe, and as he came into the World to destroy the Kingdom of Sin, we must join with him in that Design, and not let Sin reign in our Hearts, nor wilfully commit it. All Sinners, as such, and who live in habitual Sin, are Enemies to Jesus Christ, and must expect to be treated by him as such. What Hopes then of Salvation by Jesus Christ can those Christians reasonably entertain who will not be persuaded to leave their evil Ways? Who live not by his Spirit, nor according to his Gospel, but in all Things live by and follow the Spirit of the World? Fruitless will be all outward Devotion to his holy Name, groundless all hopes of being saved by him to all those who by their wicked and irregular Lives are a Reproach to the Religion they profess, and thereby affront rather than honour the sacred Name of Jesus, unless they repent and amend their Lives.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O sacred and adorable Name, Jesus! I bow down and adore thee. I praise and glorify thee, I admire and love thee. O sacred Name above every Name! No Name so sweet and delicious as the Name of Jesus. He is my only Comforter in all Afflictions; my Refuge in all my Necessities; my Help in all Temptations; my

Shield of Defence against my Enemies; my Hope and my Confidence; the desired Object of all my Wishes.

O dear Jesus, how sweet it is to think of thee, to love thee, and to enjoy thee! How wretched and insipid! How bitter and distasteful! How dry and comfortless is every Thing to my Soul without thee, O Jesus, sweeter than Honey to the Mouth, more delightful than Music to the Ear, and the greatest Joy to my Heart.

Thy sacred Name, O Jesus, shall be my Confidence in all my Tribulations and Afflictions. I will write thy holy Name upon my Heart. I will imprint it in my Memory. I will have it in my Mouth, not to abuse or prophane it, but to bless and praise it. It shall be the Subject of my Thoughts and serious Reflections. I will call upon this holy Name in the Morning; and when I rise I will close the Day, and fall asleep at Night pronouncing the same. While I live I will daily sing the Praises of Jesus, and when I die, hope to expire in calling upon his holy Name.

Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy Name, Psalm 102.

I will confess to thee, O Lord, my God, with my whole Heart, and will glorify thy Name for ever. Psalm 85.

J A N U A R Y 25.

CONVERSION of St. PAUL *the Apostle.*

THIS Festival, tho' it be not a Holiday of Obligation, has always been counted a Day of Devotion, and as such it ought to be esteemed by every one, who therein may admire the wonderful Effects of the Grace of God so conspicuous in the Conversion of St. *Paul* the Apostle, and great Doctor of the Gentiles, from a furious Persecutor of the Christian Faith, to be one of the most zealous Preachers and Defenders of it. This Conversion is recorded with all its miraculous Circumstances by S. *Luke* in the *Acts of the Apostles*, Chap. ix.

St. *Paul*, before his Conversion, called *Saul*, was remarkable in his Zeal for the Jewish, Law, and vigorously exerted himself in persecuting the Christian Church, which he beheld wonderfully to increase by the great Numbers who were daily added to it on the preaching of St. *Peter*, and the other Apostles, after the Descent of the Holy Ghost. His mistaken Zeal first shewed itself in the Martyrdom of S. *Stephen*, when he was present, and held the Cloths of those who stoned him. The Stones which were flung at the Proto-Martyr, were Music to his Ears as they whirl'd through the Air. He saw with Pleasure the Blood of the holy Deacon water the Earth, little thinking it

28 *Conversion of St. PAUL. Jan. 25.*

would produce so large an Increase, or that S. Stephen's dying Prayer would prove his Conversion to that Christian Faith he then persecuted; and which he resolved to extirpate, if possible. For this End, he went from House to House, to find out the Christians, and drag them away to Prison; and the more to satisfy his Hatred against them, he addressed himself to the High Priest, desiring of him a Commission, and Letters to *Damascus*, that whoever of the Faithful he should find there, he might be authorised to bring them bound from thence to *Jerusalem*. Having obtained his Request, and a Company of Soldiers to attend him, he set forward on his Journey and drawing near to *Damascus*, suddenly an extraordinary Light from Heaven appeared, the Brightness of which deprived him of Strength, took away his Sight, and struck him to the Ground. As he fell, he heard a clear and distinct Voice saying to him, *Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?* Astonished at this Voice, and interiorly changed, he replied, *Who art thou, Lord?* To him the Voice replied; *I am Jesus, whom thou dost persecute. It is hard for thee to kick against the Goad.* This Answer filled him with Wonder and Amazement; trembling he said, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Being directed to go into the City, by the Help of those who accompanied him, and who heard the Voice, but saw no one, he rose and went into *Damascus*, where he remained blind three Days, and without eating or drinking. After the

Conversion of St. PAUL. Jan. 25 29

the third Day a holy Disciple called *Ananias*, who had been informed by a Vision of what had happened, came to him, and laying his Hands upon him, restored him to Sight and then baptized him. *St. Paul* being thus miraculously converted, and filled with the Holy Ghost, soon became as remarkably zealous in preaching the Christian Faith, as before he had been furious in persecuting it. This sudden Change astonished every one both Jews and Christians: the latter were filled with Joy, and glorified God for making their most furious Persecutor become their most zealous Advocate, who preaching boldly in the Synagogues, and declaring Jesus to be the Son of God, drew upon himself the Fury of the Jews, who first endeavoured to reclaim him by Arguments and Disputing, but being confounded and put to Silence, they conspired to take away his Life. But their Design being known the Disciples prevented it by letting him down the City Wall in a Basket, in the Night Time, by which means he got safe from *Damascus*, and went into other Parts to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. This Conversion of *St. Paul* is placed by Ecclesiastical Writers in the latter End of the Year 34. after the Nativity of Christ. Some think it happened in the Beginning of the Year 35. The annual Festival of it is kept by the Church on the 25th of *January*.

30 *Conversion of St. PAUL. Jan. 25.*

The GOSPEL. St. Matt. Chap. xix. Ver. 27.

Then *Peter* answering, said to him, behold we have left all Things and have followed thee: what therefore shall we have? 28. And Jesus said to them: Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the Seat of his Majesty, you also shall sit on twelve Seats, judging the twelve Tribes of *Israel*. 29. And every one that hath left House or Brethren, Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands, for my Name's Sake, shall receive an Hundred-Fold, and shall possess Life everlasting.

REFLECTIONS.

The Question which *St. Peter* put to our blessed Saviour in this Gospel, was occasioned by Jesus Christ having invited a rich young Man to quit his Possessions, and to follow him, which he refusing to do, Christ took Occasion to speak of the Difficulty which rich Men have to be saved, on Account of their too great and inordinate Love of Riches and Abundance; and to shew how great the Difficulty was, said, *it was easier for a Camel to pass through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* This Discourse astonished the Apostles and made them say one to another, *Who then can be saved?* Our blessed Lord cleared the Difficulty by telling them, that though this seemed impossible to Men, yet it was not impossible with God. This Answer

swer gave St. Peter the Confidence to say to Jesus Christ: *Behold we have left all Things to follow thee, what then shall we have?* Concerning which we may observe with St. Jerome, Lib. 3. in *Matt.* Chap. ix. that neither St. Peter nor the other Apostles had left any great Possessions to follow Christ, in as much as he was but a poor Fisherman, as were several others of the Apostles, Persons of a low and mean Station in the World; nevertheless they left a great deal by leaving all they had, and all Desire of having more. When they quitted their Nets, they quitted a certain Profit by which they lived, and this they did to follow Jesus Christ in a State of greater Poverty; having nothing to depend on but the Charity of others; and in this following of Christ the Perfection of their State consisted. To abandon and contemn Riches is no more than what several heathen Philosophers have done, but to leave our wordly Possessions, and to follow Christ, was only done by the Apostles and Believers, as St. Jerome rightly observes.

We may further observe, that it is not so much what we thus leave, be it very little, or very much, as the Affection and Intention with which we leave any Thing. What we leave must be for Christ's Sake. This only will entitle us to be his Disciples, and to the promised Reward. A poor Man who abandons and leaves but little, if with that he abandons all desire of more, truly leaves a great deal, and shall have a great Reward. But this

32 *Conversion of St. PAUL. Jan. 25.*

leaving and abandoning all, as the Apostles did, is not here to be understood as including a Precept to every one actually to renounce and relinquish those Possessions God has bestowed upon them, and which are given to make a **right Use** of, by using them to the **Glory of God**, and the **Benefit of others**. All are not called to the **Perfection of an apostolic or religious State**, and to the **literal renouncing every Thing in the World**; but then every one, all Christians, are to consider that as Christians they are **Disciples of Jesus Christ**, and in that **Character** are obliged so far to renounce to all worldly Possessions as not to have their **Hearts and Affections inordinately and too much fixed upon them**, but to be willing to part with, or to be deprived of what they may enjoy whenever it may be the **Will of God** to deprive them of it, and to be ready and willing to abandon every Thing they have, when they must either do that, or something contrary to the **Precepts of the Gospel**, and the **Duty of a Christian**. Then it is we must leave all to follow Christ, without balancing between what the **World** will say of us, or what we shall lose, and what **God** requires of us. Then we must say with **St. Paul**: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* And like him, immediately obey, and with the holy Apostles rejoice that we are called to suffer, or to lose any Thing for the **Sake of Christ**.

Thus to follow Christ, is no less our Interest than our Duty. Our blessed Lord, to encourage the Apostles, and in Answer to **St. Peter's**

ter's Question, promised them a most glorious Recompence: That as they had left all they had in the World to follow him in his poor and humble Life, when he should come in his Glory and Majesty to judge all Mankind, and to render to every one according to his Works, then they should partake of that Glory, and sitting upon twelve Thrones, as so many Judges, should with him judge the twelve Tribes of *Israel*; and not only them, but all the World, by approving the most just Sentence which he will then pronounce upon every one. Nor is it only to the Apostles that our Saviour promises these glorious Rewards, but to every one who shall abandon or leave any Thing for his Sake. Hence he assures us that every one who shall have left his House, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands, for his Name's Sake, shall receive a Hundred-Fold, and possess Life everlasting. A glorious Recompence, infinitely exceeding all that we can possibly lose in this World. The Consideration of which will be a great Encouragement to follow Jesus Christ by observing his holy Precepts, and make us easy and content under the Sufferings of this World, and also to despise and condemn all its vain Pleasures and sinful Delights; for what Comparison can there be between Earth and Heaven? All that this World can give is but short and transitory; but the Joys of Heaven are everlasting. Happy those, who, by a wise Choice, abandon and leave the Things of this World,

34 *Conversion of St. PAUL. Jan. 25.*

World, at least, in Heart and Desire, to follow Christ, and thereby secure to themselves everlasting Life! And here we may observe how closely our Interest is connected with our Duty, so that in faithfully discharging one, we effectually secure the other. What, therefore, can those Christians, if they may be called such, say for themselves whose Hearts and Affections are so totally given to the World, its Riches, Pleasures and Enjoyments, as, for them, to abandon the Service of God, and all Care of their Souls? Can such ever expect to be acknowledged by Jesus Christ, as his true Disciples, or to be admitted into his Kingdom? No certainly. This is a Point of the greatest Importance to every one, and is seriously to be considered by every one who desires to be a true Christian and to save his Soul.

We may likewise here consider, as a further Encouragement, that our blessed Lord does not only promise a future Reward in the next World to those who thus follow him, but also assures them of a hundred-fold Recompence in this Life. This will be experienced in the happy Peace of a good Conscience, and those interior Consolations to be found in his Service, infinitely more desirable, infinitely more satisfactory than all the vain Amusements of Sin and Folly, or the forbidden Pleasures of this World, which are ever attended with bitter Regret and Remorse of Conscience. These interior Comforts they can best tell who experience them, and which every Man may do, by
re-

renouncing to all inordinate Love of the World, and by applying themselves seriously to the Service of God. These interior Comforts are greater, and will be more liberally bestowed upon us in Proportion to the Zeal and Fervour with which we love God, and quit any Thing for his Sake, and being joined with a well-grounded Hope of future Blifs demonstrate, by happy Experience, the Truth of what our Saviour says: *My Yoke is sweet and my Burden light.* Matt. Chap. xi. V. 30. Unhappy Worldlings, deceived by the Devil and Self-love, frame to themselves imaginary Difficulties and Hardships in following Christ, not only in his Councils, but in his Commands. They think it hard and unreasonable to deny themselves the unlawful Pleasures of this Life, tho' to gain the better, and more lasting Pleasures of Heaven; but this is a very great Mistake. It is the Yoke of the Devil which is truly heavy, and the Service of the World an insupportable Burden. The anxious Cares, Fears and Sollicitudes, and above all, the Terrors of a guilty Conscience, are heavy Burdens; which, in spite of his seeming Happiness, will over-press and sink down the Sinner, while the Comforts of a good Conscience, grounded upon, and resulting from a virtuous and holy Life, make all Things easy to the pious Christian, and render him calm and serene under all the Troubles he may here meet with, which he supports with Patience till he receives the Reward of his Piety in that happy and everlasting Life promised by our B. Saviour.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

Bounty and Goodness of Jesus ! Who would not chuse to follow him, and to serve such a beneficent Master ? How much, dear Lord, do thy Rewards exceed the little Services thou requirest of us ? When we have abandoned all, what do we leave ? Some small, short and transitory, some seeming Satisfaction, and for which thou givest us, even here, an hundred-fold Recompence, and promisest us all the Glory and Happiness of eternal Life. O thou eternal Source of all Good ! How are thy Rewards to be preferred before all the Monarchies and Kingdoms of this World ? How great is thy Goodness, O my God ! in thus promising the Glories of a never-fading Kingdom to all those who love and follow thee !

I believe, O Lord ! what I do not, as yet, see. I believe that the Glory and Happiness of Heaven are infinite, immense and incomparably greater than any Thing here. I believe that thou art the Fountain from whence all this Happiness does flow. Grant that, persevering to believe what I do not now see, I may one Day behold and possess what I now believe.

O Jesus, my adorable Saviour ! shall I make any Difficulty to abandon this World, or to leave any Thing in it for thy Sake ? Thou art infinitely more deserving than a thousand Worlds, and all that they can afford. Ah !
dearest

Conversion of St. PAUL. Jan. 25. 37

dearest Lord ! thou art the only Happiness and Life of my Soul. Nothing shall be so dear to me as thou, for thou, and thou only, art worthy of my Love. I will abandon all for the Love of thee. I will let no human Consideration balance me in my Choice between the World, and my Duty to my God. Poverty, Hardships, and Afflictions shall be welcome, if I can preserve his Favour, and enjoy his Love. I will comfort myself in him, and from him expect a full Recompence for all I may suffer, or lose for his Sake.

O glorious St. *Paul* ! chosen Vessel of Election ! Thou, who of a Persecutor of *Christ*, didst by his Grace become a zealous Preacher of his Name to the Gentiles, and for the Love of him didst count all Things Filth and Dross, pray for me, that I may love God above all Things, and, like you, follow his sweet and gracious Calls. While I endeavour to honour your Memory, pray that I may imitate your Example here, on Earth, and with you enjoy the Happiness of Heaven.

FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 2.

PURIFICATION of the B. V. Mary.

THIS Festival is instituted in Honour of the B. Virgin's going up to the Temple at *Jerusalem*, there to be purified according to the Law of *Moses*, forty Days after the Birth of *Christ*, who was then presented in the Temple by his Virgin Mother, and acknowledged by holy *Simeon*, and *Ann* the Prophetess, to be the promised *Messias*, so long expected by the *Jews*. It is called *Candlemas-Day*, from the blessing and distributing Candles to the Faithful, who bear them in their Hands to express the Share they have in *Simeon's* holy Joy, and to confess *Christ* to be the true Light of the World, by the preaching of whose Gospel the Darkness of Idolatry and Superstition has been expelled, and the glorious Sun of Truth and Righteousness has shined forth to all Nations.

This Feast was ordered to be universally observed by the Emperor *Justinian*, in the Year 542, after a great Plague at *Constantinople*, according to *Nicephorus*, in his Ecclesiastical History, *Siebert* in his Chronicle, and *Anastasius Bibliothecarius*, cited by *F. Thomassin*, in his elaborate Treatise on the Feasts of the Church Lib. ii. Chap. 11. Tho' there are good Reasons to believe, as he observes, that it was celebrated in several Places before, Cardinal
Baronius

Baronius affirms, that Pope *Gelasius*, who governed the Holy See from the Year 492, till 496, gave the first Beginning to it, in order to abolish all Remains of the *Lupercalia*, or Feasts of *Saturn*, which were in Part observed by the *Heathen Romans* in his Time. The *Romans*, when Paganism was the Religion of the Empire, used to make their Lustrations or Purifications in the Month of *February*, which from thence had its Name. In these Festivals they used to sacrifice Men to *Saturn*, afterwards the Images of Men, which again they changed into Wax-tapers. In order entirely to put down and abrogate any Remains of this heathenish Custom the Pope ordered that all the Faithful should on this Day go in Procession from the Churches with Wax-Candles blessed, and distributed by the Bishop, that by the Holiness of the Christian Mysteries might be effaced the Profanations of the Pagans. This is further confirmed by venerable *Bede*, in his Book *de Ratione Temporum*, where, speaking of this Feast, he says, this solemn Procession was made, not only on the Purification, but on all the Festivals of the B. Virgin. His Words, speaking of the Festivals of *Saturn*, are, “ But this
 “ Custom of purifying has been well changed
 “ by the Christian Religion; when, in the
 “ same Month, on the Day of the B. Virgin
 “ *Mary*, all the People, together with the
 “ Priests and Ministers of the Altar, carry in
 “ their Hands lighted Wax-Candles, which
 “ they receive from the Bishop, and singing
 “ Hymns,

“ Hymns, walk in Proceſſion from the Churches,
 “ and through the public Streets of the City ;
 “ which good Cuſtom increaſing, is obſerved
 “ alſo in the other Feſtivals of the bleſſed and
 “ perpetual Virgin *Mary*.” Thus venerable
Bede, as cited by *F. Thomasin*. This learned
 Author ſays, the ſame is aſſerted by *S. Hildephonſe*,
 Archbiſhop of *Toledo*, who died in the
 Year 667, in the firſt Sermon on this Feaſt ;
 and by *S. Eligius*, Biſhop of *Noyon* in *France*,
 who was Cotemporary with Saint *Hildephonſe*.
 Mention is alſo made of this Feaſt in the *Sacra-*
mentary of *S. Gregory* the Great ; in the *Ordo*
Romanus ; in the *Capitulars* of *Charlemain* ;
 and by all thoſe who have wrote upon the
 Church Offices. In the Life of *S. Dunſtan*,
 Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, wrote by *Oſborn*,
 his Diſciple, and Monk, and publiſhed by *Su-*
rius, in his *Lives of Saints*, Mention is made
 of a wonderful Miracle which happened on
 this Feſtival. On the Day of the Purification,
 all the People being in the Church, with their
 Candles lighted, which they offered at the
 Altar, a ſudden Wind extinguished them ; af-
 ter which Fire deſcended from Heaven, and
 lighted the Candle of Saint *Dunſtan*’s Mother,
 who was there, and from which all the others
 were again lighted. Saint *Dunſtan* was born
 in the Year 923, and made Archbiſhop of *Can-*
terbury in 963.

The GOSPEL, St. Luke, Chap. ii. Ver. 22.

And when the Days of her Purification were ended according to the Law of *Moses*, they brought him to *Jerusalem* to present him to the Lord. 23. As it is written in the Law of the Lord, that every Male first-born shall be called holy to the Lord. 24. And that they might offer a Sacrifice according to what is written in the Law of the Lord, a Pair of Turtles or two Pigeons. 25. And behold there was a Man in *Jerusalem*, named *Simeon*, and he was a just and religious Man, expecting the Consolation of *Israel*, and the Holy Ghost was in him. 26. And it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see Death, till he had first seen the *Christ* of the Lord. 27. And he came, moved by the Spirit, into the Temple. 28. And when his Parents brought in the Child *Jesus* to do for him according to the Custom of the Law. 29. He took him into his Arms, and he blessed God, and said. 30. How dost thou dismiss thy Servant, O Lord, according to thy Word in Peace. 31. Because my Eyes have seen thy Salvation, which thou hast prepared before the Face of all People. 32. A Light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of thy People *Israel*.

REFLEC-

R E F L E C T I O N S.

Many are the excellent Instructions given to us in this Day's Festival, and which we may learn from the Gospel of it. When we read in the holy Evangelist how the B. Virgin submitted to the Law of Purification, which put her, as to outward Appearance, tho' the Mother of God, upon the Level with other Women ; when we consider her, who had not contracted the least legal Impurity in bringing forth her Divine Son, yet repairing to the Temple, there to comply with this Precept of the Jewish Institute in all its humbling Circumstances, making her Offering such as was ordained for poor People ; what instructive Lessons are herein given to us ? When we consider Jesus Christ, thus in his tender Infancy, carried to the Temple, as an ordinary Infant, subjecting himself to a ceremonious Law which himself had given to the *Jews*, and which could no ways concern him, the supreme Giver of that and all other of the Mosaic Laws ? What an Example does he give to all his Disciples and Followers ? and such we are by the Character we bear of Christians. What other Sentiments therefore ought we to entertain on this Day's Festival, but those of Humility and Obedience ? If we would honour Jesus Christ and his Virgin Mother as we ought in this Day's Solemnity, we must take Care that our outward Devotions be performed with the Dispositions of an humble
Heart.

Heart, the best Proof of which is an exact Obedience to the Laws of God, and a careful Observance of those established Rules he has given us in his sacred Word.

As the Jewish Law was in Force at the Birth of Christ, and obligatory to all who were born under the Mosaic Institution, our B. Saviour would give us, in his own divine Person, a Pattern of Obedience to established Laws, and therefore would be thus presented in the Temple, as all first-born Male Children of the *Jews* were obliged by the express Command of God. From this Presentation of *Jesus* in the Temple we are taught to be submissive to all Laws established by legal Authority, and not under specious Pretences, or false Notions of Liberty, refuse to comply with what is legally and lawfully required by Superiors. This Virtue of Obedience may be said to be the Touchstone of all our other Virtues, whether they are real, or only apparent. If we are truly virtuous, we shall be truly obedient; for if we are not obedient, it is a Demonstration we are not solidly grounded in Virtue: Now this Virtue of Obedience is of an universal Extent, and obliges all Christians in all their different Stations, when what is required is lawful in itself, and legally demanded. Hence we must obey God in the first Place, and exactly observe all his Commandments. We must obey the Church and our spiritual Guides in Matters of Faith. We must obey Princes in all they have a Right to and do legally require

quire of us. We must obey our Parents, and all others to whom we are by any Title subject. To the Practice of this Virtue we have the Example of Jesus Christ, not only in this Mystery of his Presentation in the Temple, but in every Action of his most holy Life. He says of himself, that he came into the World, not to do his own Will, but the Will of his Father who sent him. And we are told by *St. Peter*, Ep. Chap. v. that *he has left us an Example, that we should follow his Steps.*

We may further in this Mystery consider him offering himself up to his eternal Father in our Behalf, and there beginning that adorable Sacrifice which he afterwards compleated on the Altar of his Cross. We may here likewise learn how and in what Manner we are to offer up ourselves to God, who is our sovereign Lord, and to dedicate ourselves totally to him, for we totally belong to him who has given us all we have. He made us, and not we ourselves; therefore we belong to him, and it is an Act of Injustice, as well as a high Affront to him, to draw any Part of ourselves from him to bestow it upon the World or any Creature. The Jews were obliged to offer to God in the Temple every first-born Male Child, and to ransom him by an Offering substituted in his Place. This was commanded them, that they might remember how he once for their Sakes destroyed all the First-born among the *Egyptians*, and that they might acknowledge him to be their Lord and their God. Nor is
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he less our Lord and God than theirs. We are Christians, born under the Law of Grace, and by Baptism have been consecrated to him, and his holy Service. Happy those Christians who seriously think of this, and often call to Mind their Baptismal Covenant. This ought to be a great and peculiar Part of our Devotions, at this Time, uniting ourselves in Spirit to the holy Jesus, and his virgin Mother, and with them go up to the Temple, and present ourselves to the Lord, making a solemn Protestation of our sincere Obedience to his holy Law, renewing all our good Purposes and Resolutions, that so we may find Acceptance in his Sight, and thereby confess his supreme Sovereignty, and our entire Dependance upon, and Subjection to him. This is our Duty, and we ourselves may see how far we fall short of it, if, without regarding this, we content ourselves with a meer external Shew, or outward joining with the Church in her solemn Offices. It is the Heart God chiefly regards, and it is that which in the first Place he requires, a Heart not divided between the World and him, but purified and cleansed from all sinful Attachments to, or Love of the World, and totally given to him.

It is thus we are to celebrate the Purification of the B. Virgin, and the Presentation of the Infant Jesus in the Temple. Let us do so, and endeavour to cleanse and purify our Souls from all Filth and Stains of Sin, that we may be worthy to receive Jesus Christ spiritually in
our

our Arms, by the Communication of his Grace, as holy *Simeon* corporally beheld the divine Infant, and embraced him. This holy Man, venerable for his Years and Sanctity, had this peculiar Favour conferred upon him ; he came into the Temple, and taking Jesus in his Arms, in Raptures of Joy, cries out, *now dost thou dismiss thy Servant, O Lord, in Peace, according to thy Word, because my Eyes have seen thy Salvation.* We likewise may see Jesus by the Light of Faith, and embrace him by devout Affections ; but here again we are to consider, that he will not communicate himself to Sinners wilfully living in a State of Sin. O how prejudicial to us is Sin ! How carefully to be avoided, which deprives us of the Happiness Christ desires to bestow upon us ! Christians, be careful then to cleanse and purify your Souls, and wash away the Stains you have contracted, by the salutary Waters of Penance, and sincere Resolutions of Amendment, that you may not only see by Faith, but effectually partake of this Salvation, *prepared before the Face of all People* ; and from which none are exempted but unhappy wilful Sinners, who love Darkneſs rather than Light, and prefer the sinful wretched Pleasures of this World. before the endless Glory and Happiness of Heaven. Let us conclude our Reflections on this Day's Solemnity with a sincere Resolution to love and serve God faithfully to the End of our Lives, since he himself will be the Recompence

pence of our Obedience, and in him we shall be eternally happy.

ASPIRATIONS.

Divine Redeemer of Mankind ! I adore thee in this Mystery of thy Presentation. I desire to accompany thee, O my Jesus, to the Temple, and there to offer myself with thee. Thou wouldst be presented therein by thy Virgin Mother, and didst offer up thyself to thy eternal Father. I beg leave to offer up myself with thee, to the End, that under the Shadow of thy Wings I may find Acceptance in his Sight.

O eternal Author, and Sovereign Lord of all Creatures ! In Union with the Offering which thy beloved Son did make of himself to thee, in Behalf of all Mankind, at this Time when he was presented in the Temple. I humbly offer up myself and all that I have to thy adorable Majesty. I offer unto thee, O my God, my Heart, my Soul, and my Body ; my Thoughts, my Words, and my Actions ; my Memory, Will, and Understanding ; all which I consecrate to thy holy Service. I resign myself entirely up to thy holy Disposition, and desire nothing but that thy most holy Will may be done in all Things.

O thou true and only Life of my Soul ! adorable Jesus ! my Eyes have seen thy Salvation ; my Eyes have beheld thee, the Light of the Gentiles, and the Glory of thy People *Israel*. Thou art, O Jesus, that Light which
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illuminates every Man coming into the World. Thou art the Star of *Jacob*, by the Brightness of which are dispelled all those thick Clouds of Darkneſs which had overspread the World. Before thee all Darkneſs vaniſhes, and by the Favour of thy Light we diſcover that Beauty which charms our Hearts, and raviſhes our Souls.

O Jeſus ! ſeeing thee thus here by the Light of Faith, what can I deſire more but to behold thee in the clear Viſion of thy Glory ? O may I be ſo happy there to behold and enjoy thee ; there to poſſeſs and love thee for ever !

Sacred Virgin ! Mother of Jeſus, by that Love wherewith you offered your divine Son in the Temple to his eternal Father, preſent me, tho' an unworthy Sinner, to his divine Majeſty, and by your powerful Interceſſion obtain for me that I may never depart from his holy Will, and that while I live I may never ceaſe to love him moſt ardently, and ſerve him moſt faithfully.

FEBRUARY 24.

St. MATTHIAS, *the Apoſtle.*

THIS Saint was taken into the Sacred College, to ſupply a Vacancy made therein by the Deſertion and Death of the Traitor *Judas*, who having baſely betrayed his

his Master, the holy Jesus, into the Hands of the Jews, struck with Horror at his own Perfidiousness and Ingratitude, first returned back to the Chief Priests the Money he had received from them to betray Christ, and then, full of Despair, went and hanged himself, and falling down, his Bowels came out. Thus one of the twelve Pillars was broke, but the Loft was soon repaired by another more strong and firm being placed in its Room. St. Peter proposed to the Faithful the electing of another into the Apostleship from among those Disciples who had followed Jesus from his Baptism till his Ascension. The Proposal was accepted, and two were nominated, *Joseph* called *Barsabas*, who was surnamed *Justus*, and *Matthias*. The Apostles joined in Prayer, and begg'd of God to determine the Person, and the Lot fell upon *Matthias*, who was then associated to the eleven Apostles, and made up the Number twelve. The new-elected Apostle soon gave Proof how capable he was of the arduous Office to which he was chosen; for having received the Grace of the Apostleship, with an undaunted Courage, and equal Zeal, he preached Jesus Christ to the Jews, proving that he was their true and only Messias.

After the Descent of the Holy Ghost, when the Apostles separated, and left *Jerusalem*, to carry the glorious Light of the Gospel into the different Parts of the World, St. *Matthias* travelled into *Ethiopia*, and there successfully preached the Faith of Christ, and

from him those distant barbarous Nations learned to submit to the sweet and easy Yoke of *Christ*: The Heathen Temples began to be deserted, the Worship of Idols gave way to the Worship of the one true God, and great Numbers were converted to the Christian Faith. But in order to stop the growing Progress of the Gospel, the Devil stirred up a Persecution against the infant Church; the pagan Priests were filled with Rage and Indignation to behold Christianity daily gain Ground, and Idolatry on the Point of being rooted out, and their Rage was in a particular Manner bent against St. *Matthias*, who by their Means was first stoned, and then beheaded, thus finishing his zealous and apostolic Labours by a glorious Martyrdom. In what Year he suffered is uncertain, but his Festival is observed in the Church on the 24th of *February*. Mention is made of this Festival in the Sacramentary of St. *Gregory* the Great, and was made a Double by Pope *Boniface* VIII. The Gospel and Homily which are now read, were added to its Office by Pope *Pius* V. who also changed the Lessons of the Second Nocturn. It is celebrated in Leap Year on the 25th of this Month, by a Decree of *Alexander* III. See *Gavant. Com. in Rub. Sect. vii. Chap. iv.*

The GOSPEL, St. *Matt.* Chap. xi. Ver. 25.

At that Time Jesus said, I confess to thee,
 O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because
 thou

thou hast hid these Things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. 26. Yes, Father, for so it hath seemed good to thee. 27. All Things are delivered up to me by my Father, and no one knoweth the Son but the Father, nor doth any one know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it pleases the Son to reveal him. 28. Come unto me, all you who labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you. 29. Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of Heart, and you shall find Rest to your Souls. 30. For my Yoke is sweet, and my Burden light.

REFLECTIONS.

In this Gospel we may observe that Jesus Christ praises his heavenly Father, for that he had justly hid the Knowledge of him from the Wise and Prudent in their own Conceit, such as were the proud Scribes and Pharisees, who, carried away by Arrogance and a too great Opinion of themselves, refused to be taught the Way of Humility, and, by that to come to Christ, whom they insolently contemned and despised; but he was revealed to the little ones, that is, the Knowledge of him as the Son of God, and promised Saviour of the World, was made known to the poor and humble Disciples who followed him. From hence we may learn, that Pride and Self-conceit are very great Obstacles, and dangerous Hindran-

ces to come to the true and saving Knowledge of Jesus Christ, who reveals himself only to the humble and low of Heart, such who are little in their own Eyes, and who with humble Obedience, and a docile Submission, hearken to his holy Word, and obey his divine Calls. Our blessed Lord here likewise testifies of himself, that he was the Son of God, and that as he was known only to the Father, so no one could know the Father but by him, and through him, by believing that he was the Son of God, and sent into the World for the Salvation of the World, and of all who believe in him. The Use we are to make of this Consideration is to ground ourselves in true Humility, and a Christian Simplicity, thereby to render ourselves worthy of the Communications of divine Grace. It is not great Parts and Learning, superior Talents, that are here required; by them only, especially if accompanied with a high Opinion of our own Wit and Judgment, we shall make no great Progress in the School of Christ, or the Science of the Saints; for *God resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Humble.* Ep. S. Jac. Chap. iv. *Unless ye become as little Children,* says Christ, *ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* St. Matt. Chap. viii. Such were the Disciples, such were the Apostles, of whom one, unhappy Judas, fell from his sacred Dignity, and made Way for the more humble and faithful *Matthias*. Dreadful but instructive Instance, teaching us
to

to place our Security in Humility which procures us Grace, as Pride robs us of it.

It is an excellent Advice and pertinent to this Purpose, which St. Paul gives: *Let him who stands, take care lest he fall.* 1 Cor. Chap. x. Ver. 12. We have all Reason to fear our own Weakness, and to take care the Enemy of our Souls does not deceive us. The fall of *Judas* may justly make us apprehend for ourselves. Alas! can weak, slender Trees be safe, when the tall Cedars are blown down? *Judas* was chosen by Jesus Christ to be one of his peculiar Disciples, and was honoured with the apostolic Dignity. He received equal Power with the rest, and like them was sent to preach, to cure the Sick, and to cast out Devils, and yet becomes as a Devil himself. He basely betrayed his divine Master for a little Money into the Hands of his cruel Enemies, and then in Despair hanged himself. Christians! we may be justly astonished to consider how one who had for a long Time waited upon the Holy Jesus, who had been his Disciple, had experienced his Goodness, and had received so many Favours from him, should be so ungrateful and perfidious. We may indeed behold with Wonder and Indignation the treacherous *Judas* who preferred a few Pieces of Silver before his divine Master, in whom were contained all the Treasures of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God; but shall we not have Reason to be covered with Confusion if we look upon ourselves, and con-

sider how often we may have done the same ! For, how often do we abuse the Favours of God to satisfy our Passions ? How often have we slighted his heavenly Graces, and postponed them to Earthly Pleasures ? How often have we preferred the Favour of Men to the pleasing of God ? These Reflections may give us a true Sense of our own Weakness and Insufficiency, and instruct us to rely, not on ourselves, but on the Grace of God, without which we should soon fall into the Power of our Enemy, as nothing but his Grace can preserve us from the Devil's Malice, and hinder him from prevailing against us.

While we are thus cautioned properly to guard against the Wiles and Assaults of our Enemy, we have likewise in this holy Gospel, comfortable Instructions how to rise from our Falls when he has prevailed against us. We must not despond, but with Humility and a just Confidence have recourse to Jesus Christ, who kindly invites all even the greatest Sinners to Repentance. *Come unto me all you who labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.* St. Matt. Ch. xi. V. 28. How tenderly does our dear Redeemer here invite all poor Sinners labouring under the heavy Burden of their Sins ! He calls and invites all such to come to him, and promises to ease them of their Burden by the Pardon of their Sins, and to refresh them by his Grace. *Come unto me.* Charming Words ! abundantly sufficient to dispel all melancholy, desponding Thoughts arising from the Consideration of
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our many and grievous Sins. It is a common Artifice of the Devil, first to tempt and draw us into Sin, and when he has done this to endeavour to make us despair of Pardon, that so we may continue and go on in Sin. He represents to us in a wrong Light the severe Judgments of God, his terrible Wrath and Indignation against Sin, in order to give us wrong Notions, and that we may think our Sins unpardonable, and so never seek to repent and amend. But, as he is the Father of Lies, and seeks only to deceive us to our Ruin, we must not mind him, nor believe his false and lying Insinuations. We ought certainly rather to hearken to the comfortable Promises of God, Truth itself, and the Assurance he gives, that tho' we are very great Sinners and have grievously offended him, yet he will pardon us upon our sincere Repentance. To this with all endearing Kindness he lovingly invites us, and says to us by his Prophet Ezechiel, *As I live, I desire not the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he be converted and live. Turn to me then, O House of Israel: why will you die, O House of Israel?* Exech. Chap. xxxiii. Ver. 11. *Come unto me all you who labour under the heavy Load of Sin, and are burdened with a guilty Conscience, and I will refresh you.* Thus does our gracious Redeemer call, thus does he mercifully invite us. No false Fears then, no Doubts or Suggestions of the Enemy ought to hinder us from going to him, as from him, and from him alone we

must expect to find Relief ; and after this plain and gracious Declaration we can have no Reason to fear, and if we are lost it will be entirely our own Fault, in not corresponding with the Graces offered us, and with what is no less our Interest than our Duty ; for what can be more our Interest, or more nearly concern us than the Salvation of our Souls ? And if we wilfully neglect it, and continue in Sin, we shall one Day see our Folly when it is too late to retrieve it.

For our further Encouragement let us attend to what Jesus Christ says in the Conclusion of this Gospel : *My Yoke is sweet and my Burden light.* It is a great Mistake, a false Notion the Devil endeavours to give us, that the Service of God is hard and grievous, and to save our Souls extremely difficult, if not impossible. To serve God is pleasant, and easy by Grace, but the Ways of Sin are truly hard and uncomfortable. A virtuous, christian Life affords even here the greatest and most solid Comforts : The Practice of Piety, makes every Thing easy and delightful. No Hardships or Difficulties are burthenfome to those who love God. Ah let us not then foolishly think that Yoke hard, or that Burden heavy, which is to be carried only for a few Years, and will then be followed by eternal Happiness and Rest.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus, Saviour of the World ! grant that I may be always little in my own Eyes. Give me that Humility which leads to thee : Take from me all Pride and Conceit. Let me not be carried away by the Spirit of worldly Wisdom or human Prudence, so as to refuse to acknowledge and follow thee. I confess thee to be the Son of God, the Son of thy eternal Father, and that I can only come by him to thee. Draw me then to thee, O dearest Jesus ! may I constantly adhere to thee, and may nothing be able to separate me from thee. Communicate thyself to me, sweet Redeemer of my Soul ! and make me perfectly know that I can be only happy in thee. O let me be of the Number of those little Ones of whom thou hast said ; *Of such is the Kingdom of God.*

O Jesus, my adorable Master ! how sweet is thy Yoke, and how light thy Burden ! Nothing is hard or difficult to a Soul that loves thee. I willingly submit to thy sweet Yoke, and desire to learn of thee my meek and humble Saviour, so shall I find true Rest to my Soul. Give me then, dear Lord, that Meekness of Spirit, as no Injuries or Contempts may move me. Give me that profound and sincere Humility which may make me acceptable to thee.

As the wounded, wearied Hart pants after the Water-Brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee,

thee O, God. Psal. xli. My Soul, dear Lord, is grievously wounded, and is ready to sink under the heavy Burden of Sin. I beg of thee, O Jesus, to be freed from it. I come to thee for Ease and Refreshment. Receive me into the Arms of thy Mercy, and free me from this Burden under which I groan. I desire to lay it down at the Foot of thy Cross, and to refresh my tired, fainting Soul with those Streams of precious Blood which flow from thy sacred and life-giving Wounds.

O holy *St. Matthias*, who wast elected among the Apostles, those humble little Ones who knew and followed Christ. Pray for me that I may be truly humble and meek. Intercede for me, great Saint! that, like you, I may faithfully serve my God here, and with you enjoy him in Heaven hereafter.

M A R C H 19.

St. JOSEPH, Spouse of the B. V.

THIS great and illustrious Saint, tho' by Profession a poor Carpenter, was of the royal Family of *David*; and, by a lineal Descent from that Monarch, had a just Right to the Crown of *Judea*, which, at the Time of his being espoused to the blessed Virgin *Mary*, was possessed by *Herod the Ascalonite*, a Stranger,

Stranger, and thereby was fulfilled that celebrated Prophecy of the Patriarch *Jacob*, *The Scepter shall not be taken away from Juda, and the Guide from his Thigh, untill he comes, who is to be sent: and he shall be the Expectation of the Gen'iles.* Gen. Chap. 49. Ver. 10. But if St. *Joseph* did not enjoy the Honours and Regalities of a Throne due to him as a Descendant from the royal Line of *David*; if he lived in a poor, retired Way, under the mean Appearance of a labouring Man, and was obliged to work at the laborious Trade of a Carpenter, in that low and humble State he attained greater Honours, and arrived at a much higher Dignity than he could have enjoyed had he sat upon the Throne of his Ancestors with all the Splendor and Magnificence of *David* or *Solomon*. The Character the Holy Ghost gives him in Scripture that *he was a just Man*, will give us greater Ideas of his Excellency than all the tinsel Ornaments of Royalty, or the Parade of splendid Courtiers and Attendants. The eminent Dignity of being Spouse to the blessed Virgin and Foster-Father to the Infant *Jesus*, raised him far above the greatest Monarchs of the Earth, and with these glorious Titles he appears greater than if he had been Master of the *Roman* Empire. To call *Jesus* Christ Son, and to be reputed his Father who was the eternal Son of God, the Sovereign Lord of Men and Angels, what can be greater? what more glorious? This Honour was conferred upon St. *Joseph*, and therefore conferred upon

upon him because *he was a just Man.* This is enough to give us a true Idea of the glorious Prerogatives of St. *Joseph*, concerning whom we frequently meet with great Encomiums in the Writings of the ancient Fathers.

The Institution of this Feast is not, indeed, to be traced so high towards Antiquity as that of some other Saints, but that can be no just Derogation from his Merit, nor ought to lessen our Respect for him. If his Festival is of a more modern Date it will appear so much more glorious when we consider that it was instituted at the earnest and unanimous Intreaty of the chief Princes and Monarchs of Christendom, who having reaped the Benefit of his holy Intercession, were desirous to put themselves and their Kingdoms under his powerful Protection: Nor have his Merits and Intercession been less beneficial to particular Persons who have had recourse to him and begged his Prayers, as might be proved by many authentic and undeniable Testimonies.

It is the general Opinion of Ecclesiastical Writers that St. *Joseph* died before our blessed Saviour's Passion, and most probably after our Lord's Baptism in the River *Jordan* and his beginning to appear in public. This may be gathered, in some Measure, from the holy Gospels, where we read that the Scribes and Pharisees, endeavouring to traduce our blessed Saviour, and to diminish his Credit with the People, said of him in Scorn; *Whence hath this Man Wisdom and Miracles? is not he the*
Son

Son of a Carpenter? St. Matt. Chap. xiii. Ver. 55. And in another Place they said of him; *Is not he a Carpenter the Son of Mary?* St. Mark, Chap. vi. Ver. 3. From these Passages of Scripture it seems evident that our Saviour worked with St. *Joseph* at his Trade, and probably for some Time after his Death, to maintain himself and his Mother the blessed Virgin. Father *Thomassin*, in his Treatise of the Feasts of the Church, tells us, that the History of the Eastern Church, which was found and presented, as authentic, to Pope *Adrian VI.* relates how Jesus Christ assisting St. *Joseph* on his Death-bed, leaned on his Pillow, took him by the Hand, and closing his Eyes gave him his Benediction for a happy Passage out of this World. The same Author says, the Devotion of the Faithful first met with Public Encouragement under the Pontificate of Pope *Gregory II.* in the fourteenth Century, and that the first Place consecrated to his Memory is supposed to be a Chapel in the cathedral Church of *Avignon*, where the Altar-piece represents this Patriarch conducting Jesus and *Mary* into *Egypt*. *Gavant*, in his Commentaries on the Rubricks, says, that Mention is made of the Festival of St. *Joseph*; in the Appendix to the Sacramentary of St. *Gregory* the Great, under the Title of the Nursing Father of our Lord; and that Pope *Sixtus IV.* renewed the Festival, which was made a Holiday of Obligation by *Gregory XV.* with

62 *St. JOSEPH. March 19.*

with a Decree of the sacred Congregation
issued out, *May 8, 1621.*

The GOSPEL, St. Matt. Chap. i. Ver. 18.

Now the Generation of Christ was this. When *Mary* his Mother was espoused to *Joseph*, before they came together, she was found with Child of the Holy Ghost. 19. And *Joseph* her Husband being a just Man, and not willing to expose her to public Shame had a mind to dismiss her privately. 20. But while he was Thinking of these Things, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his Sleep, saying *Joseph*, Son of *David*, fear not to take *Mary* thy Wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his Name *Jesus*, for he shall save his People from their Sins.

REFLECTIONS.

How admirable and truly wonderful is the Conduct of divine Providence, as represented in the Gospel of this Day, full of Mystery, full of Instruction! How true is it; the Ways of God are past finding out. *Rom. Chap. xi. Ver. 33.* *St Joseph* was espoused to the blessed Virgin, yet knew her not, when the Holy Ghost overshadowed her, and she conceived *Jesus Christ*; but because it was necessary to conceal this Mystery then, *St. Joseph*

Joseph was before destin'd to cover the Reputation of the Virgin Mother, and the Honour of her Infant Son, who, as a sacred Depositum was to be committed to his Care. The Mystery of the Incarnation was not, as yet, revealed to him, nor had the blessed Virgin acquainted her Spouse with the glorious Message brought to her by the Angel *Gabriel*. She had been to visit her Cousin *Elizabeth*, and some Time after her Return to her Spouse, before they came together, she was found with Child of the Holy Ghost. She was discovered, as St. *Jerome* observes, *Lib. 1. Com. in Cap. 1. S. Matt.* By no one but St. *Joseph*, who, as her Spouse, was more intimately conversant with her. This Discovery filled him with Concern, but being a just Man, he did not immediately give way to rash Judgments or Suspicions of so holy and innocent a Person, of whose consummate Virtue he was thoroughly convinced; and who, under this Surprise of her Spouse, was easy and resigned, nor alledged any Thing in her own Behalf, but left the Matter entirely to God, as his Work, and from whom she patiently expected the Issue, and that in his good Time he would clear her Innocence and make known the Mystery. From hence we may learn, that God oftentimes permits the Innocence and Fidelity of his best Servants to be severely tried, and for their greater Merit; and if we come to experience these Trials on similar Occasions, we must endeavour to immitate the Conduct of
holy

holy *Mary* and St. *Joseph*. We must commit ourselves and our Cause to God, leaving it to him to protect and make known our Innocence, which he will do, and we shall find all those Trials to be for our greater Good. Thus he protected the ancient Patriarch *Joseph* in *Egypt*, under the false Accusation of his Master *Potiphar's* Wife, and made that the first Step to his future Dignity.

This Conduct of St. *Joseph* with regard to his Virgin Spouse, deserves and requires our further serious Consideration, and will be of great Advantage to us, if we duly reflect upon it. However surprised and troubled he might be, he suspends his Judgment, and remains in a respectful Silence for fear he should blemish Truth and her Chastity. He did not shew any Uneasiness, and was unwilling to expose her. All he thought of doing in an Affair of so nice and delicate a Nature, was to dismiss her privately, and to separate from her in Expectation of the Event. He would send her away privately, that so he might cover her supposed Misfortune, and save the Honour and Credit of her Family. Prudent and excellent Conduct of this just Man in such an Exigence! Admirable Instruction to us, Christians! and from whence we are to learn to avoid, and guard against rash Judgment, and not willingly to harbour suspicious Thoughts to the Prejudice of any, especially Persons of Merit and untainted Character. We ought to imitate St. *Joseph*, who patiently bore the sup-
posed

posed Accident of the blessed Virgin; without divulging, or making it known, he charitably kept silence, and without reproaching her, deliberated with himself what was to be done. With him we ought to suspend our Judgments, and to weigh the Grounds of our Suspicions in the Spirit of Charity. And when any Thing appears really criminal, to cover and lessen it as much as may be consistent with Truth and Justice. It is an excellent Advice of St. Bernard, Serm. 10. in Cant. *Excuse the Intention if you cannot the Fact; take it for a Mistake, judge it a Surprise, or think it but a Chance.* But, how far do they fall short of this christian Spirit of Charity? how little do they imitate St. Joseph, who upon the Discovery of any Fault in their Neighbour, not only let the Reigns loose to rash Judgment, but immediately publish and declare it to every one, and too often with a great many aggravating Circumstances which have perhaps no other Foundation than their own suspicious and censorious Temper? This is directly contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel we profess to believe, and the Character it gives of St. Joseph, that *he was a just Man.* Our divine Master in his admirable Sermon on the Mount, says, *Judge not, and you shall not be judged.* St. Matt. Chap. vii. Ver. 1. If we will judge our Neighbour's Actions, let it be in Charity and favourable to him; rash and hasty Judgments are not only offensive to God, injurious to our Neighbour and prejudicial to ourselves,

ourselves, but are oftentimes attended with fatal Consequences, and are productive of dreadful Evils, such as irreparable Breaches of Friendship, Discords, Quarrels, and Contentions, Hatred and a Study of Revenge, of which, Records sacred and Ecclesiastical give many melancholy, but instructive Instances. To avoid these Evils, let us always think and speak the best we can of our Neighbour; and never condemn him upon Hearsays and Reports. Let us weigh all Circumstances, and enlarge every Thing in his Favour: And it is acting the Christian Part even to hide as much as may be his real Faults, and shew thereby a tender Regard to his Reputation. Such a christian and charitable Conduct will entitle us, in this Respect, to that truly great Character given in the sacred Oracles to St. *Joseph*, that *he was a just Man*. The happy Effect of whose prudent Suspension of Judgment is related by the holy Evangelist for our Instruction.

The Spouse of the blessed Virgin considering the strange Accident, and ignorant, then, of the Designs of God, resolved to proceed in the Affair with the utmost Caution, and as much as might be to preserve the Reputation of that holy Person. A prudent and charitable Resolution, which having taken, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared to him and freed him instantly from all his Doubts and Fears, by discovering to him the Truth, and revealing to him the great Mystery of the Incarnation.

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The Angel told him of the promised Messias whom his immaculate Virgin Spouse was to bring forth, and having delivered his Message, departed, and left St. *Joseph* equally filled with Wonder and with Joy, to understand the Innocence of his Spouse, and her being chosen to bring forth the promised Saviour and Redeemer, and himself appointed to be his reputed Father, and to give him the holy Name *Jesus*. How exactly does this holy Patriarch answer his Character of a just Man? He is satisfied: he requires no further Proof, nor starts any new Difficulties. Rising from Sleep he did as the Angel of the Lord commanded him. Happy Effect of his prudent Moderation and Suspension of Judgment! Useful Lesson to us for our Behaviour in regard of ourselves, and of our Neighbour. In all Trials to be patient and easy, truly resigned to the Will of God, and to preserve a good Conscience in the Sight of God and Man, and to give no one just Grounds of Offence. If others censure and condemn us, to say or do no more in our own Behalf, than what Justice and Truth shall require of us, and to leave the rest to God. As for dubious and uncertain Occasions relating to our Neighbour, to suspend our Judgments, and not hastily to determine in Matters of Moment which may affect him.

To conclude our Reflections, we may lastly observe how St. *Joseph* conserved his Character of a just Man, under all the Hardships and Difficulties of a poor and laborious Calling,
and

and from hence may learn that Sanctity and Perfection are very consistent with a Life of Toil and Labour. If Providence places us in a low Station, and we are obliged to work hard to maintain ourselves and Families, let us take St. *Joseph* as a Pattern for our Imitation, and like him join Innocence to our Labour, sanctifying our Work by Prayer and repeated Oblations to almighty God, and discharge our Obligations with chearful Summision to his holy Will. The Son of God was born of a poor, humble Virgin, and her Spouse, a poor Carpenter, was designed to be his reputed Father. Is there then any Reason to be ashamed of Poverty or a low Station, when Jesus Christ has thus honoured it? Let us be content then with a low and mean Condition, if by the Dispensations of Providence it is our Lot : as from St. *Joseph* we are taught, that an humble and laborious Calling is no Bar to the Favours of Heaven, and that while we bow our Backs to Labour, our Hearts may be raised up to God, and that we may be rich in his Sight, tho' poor and contemptible in the Eyes of the World.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus, my adorable Redeemer, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the most pure Womb of *Mary*, thy Virgin Mother, unknown to St. *Joseph*, who nevertheless did not do, or say any Thing that might blemish her
unspotted

unspotted Character, deliver me from all rash Suspicions and temerarious Judgment of any one. Give me thy Grace that I may always put the most favourable Construction on my Neighbour's Words and Actions. May I consider every Thing maturely, nor ever proceed with Haste and Inconsideration in any Business wherein the good Name and Reputation of others may be concerned.

Saviour of the World, who art the true Light, enlightening every one ! illuminate my Understanding, clear the Eye of my Soul that I may discover my many hidden and secret Defects, all my own great Faults, and from thence learn to judge ill of no one but myself, and always favourably of others. Root out of my Heart all Contempt of any one, that I may never despise any one, nor proudly prefer myself before him. Let it be a standing Rule of my Conduct to do as I would be done by, and to think as charitably of others, as I would have them think of me.

O holy St. *Joseph*, pray for me that I may imitate your Humility, your Patience and Resignation. That I may love God above all Things, and my Neighbour as myself ; that I may love him, not in Words only but in Deeds. Obtain for me Charity and Prudence in all my Actions, that I may please God and find Acceptance in his Sight.

MARCH 25.

Annunciation of the the B. V. MARY.

THE Feast the Church this Day celebrates is in Honour of the Annunciation of the Virgin *Mary*, and the Conception of Jesus Christ in her pure and most chaste Womb. Antiently it was stiled the Feast of the Conception of Jesus Christ, and was celebrated together with his Nativity, at *Christmas*. St. *Austin*, according to F. *Thomasin*, seems to be the first who mentions this Festival as on the 25th of *March*. In the Council in *Trullo*, held in the Year 682, it was forbid to celebrate Mass entirely in Lent on any Day but *Saturdays*, *Sundays*, and the Day of the Annunciation. From whence it is plain this Festival was observed in the East before that Time. At *Milan*, it was for a long Time observed on the *Sunday* before the Birth of our Saviour; and the Reason of its being thus transferred, in some Churches, from the Month of *March* to *December*, may be in Consequence of a Determination made in the Council of *Laodicea*, that the Solemnity of a Festival was not compatible with the Rigors of the Lenten Fast, of which the Month of *March*, at least the latter End, is always Part. But towards the ninth Age, when the Bishops and Prelate began to alter that Part of Discipline, and allowed Festi-
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Annunciation of the B. V. Mar. 25. 71

vals to be observed on Fast-Days, that is, as to what related to the Office, then this Feast of the Anunciation was brought back to the 25th of *March*, on which Day it has ever since been universally celebrated. At *Rome* it seems always to have been observed on this Day, and when the Council of *Toledo* ordered it should be kept on the 25th of *March*, it observes, that a double Feast of this Kind was kept in the Churches of *Spain*. One on the eighth of the Calends of *April*, or the 25th of *March*, that they might conform to the Custom of the *Roman* Church, which it stiles the Mother and Mistress of all other Churches. The other to be solemnized eight Days before *Christmas*, and which they call the Feast of the Expectation, and is at this Day observed in *Spain*, and the Dominions which do, or did belong to the *Spanish* King, with Approbation of the Apostolic See.

The GOSPEL. St. Luke, Chap. i. Ver. 26.

And in the sixth Month the Angel *Gabriel* was sent from God to a City of *Galilee*, named *Nazareth*. 27. To a Virgin espoused to a Man whose Name was *Joseph*, of the House of *David*, and the Name of the Virgin was *Mary*. 28. And the Angel entering in said to her, Hail, full of Grace: our Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among Women. 29. Which when she had heard, she was troubled at his Saying, and thought what Kind of Salu-

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72 *Annunciation of the B. V. Mar. 25.*

tation this should be. 30. And the Angel said to her, Fear not, *Mary*, for thou hast found Grace with God. 31. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy Womb, and bring forth a Son and shall call his Name *Jesus*. 32. He shall be great, and be called the Son of the most High, and the Lord God will give to him the Throne of *David* his Father: and he shall reign in the House of *Jacob* for ever. 33. And of his Kingdom there shall be no End. 34. And *Mary* said to the Angel, How shall this be, because I know not Man? 35. And the Angel answered and said to her, The Holy Ghost shall come to thee from above, and the Power of the most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore the Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God. 36. And behold thy Cousin *Elizabeth*, she also hath conceived a Son in her Old-Age: and this is the sixth Month with her who is called Barren. 37. Because nothing shall be impossible to God. 38. And *Mary* said, Behold the Handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to thy Word.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

The Gospel for this Festival acquaints us with, and proposes to our serious Consideration the great and admirable Mystery of the Incarnation of *Jesus Christ*, and the infinite Love of God therein manifested to Mankind. He had graciously promised a Redeemer who should
reconcile

reconcile the Sons of *Adam* to him their offended Maker, and blot out the Hand-writing of Sin and Death issued out against them, and restore them to that Happiness and Bliss for which they were created. The Devil had seduced our first Parents, and drawn them into Rebellion against God, and, with them, all their Offspring became Enemies to him and Slaves to the Devil, who pleased his own Malice in their Ruin and Misery. In this sad Condition must the World have always remained, had not God taken pity on it, and promised to redeem it: For this great End he sent his only Son into the World, to assume our human Nature, and to become Man, that, by dying on the Cross, he might accomplish this great and glorious Work. Admirable Effect of divine Goodness and Mercy! How conspicuous does the Love of God to Man appear! How has he defeated the Devil's Malice, and turned that wherein he gloried to his greater Confusion! The Devil triumphed in the fall of Man, and having drawn him into Rebellion against his Maker, and from thence did God shew his Power, and his Love to Man by vouchsafing to redeem him from his Misery, to pardon his Rebellion, to become his Saviour, and to restore him to Grace and Favour.

But if the Goodness of God is truly great, and his Love truly admirable in being thus reconciled to Man who had so unworthily offended him, this Mercy is more conspicuous

and appears with greater Lustre in the Manner observed in this great Work of Power and Goodness. He did not assign the Redemption of Man to a Cherub, or Seraph, nor to any of those glorified Spirits the usual Ministers of his Will, who, tho' full of Charity and Pity for lost Man, could not help him. This was what God alone could do: and which he did by sending his beloved Son into the World to be the Saviour of it. The Angel *Gabriel* was sent to the City of *Nazareth*, to the blessed Virgin, to declare to her the joyful News; that she was chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God, and to bring forth the long-expected and promised *Messias*. The heavenly Messenger, entering her Chamber, saluted her with great Reverence, and said to her, *Hail, full of Grace: our Lord is with thee*; and having removed her Trouble and Surprise at this Salutation, told her of the great Mystery to be performed in her, and that she should bear in her Womb and bring forth the Son of God. Having delivered this Message, he departed and left her overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, by whose divine and ineffable Operation she conceived in her most pure Womb the Saviour of the World.

Another Circumstance of this great Mystery, and seriously to be considered, is the Behaviour of the blessed Virgin, wherein we may behold an admirable and instructive Example of Humility and Resignation. Being told by the Archangel that she was to conceive and bring forth

forth the promised *Messias*, and thereby become Mother to the Son of God; far from being elated, or puffed up with Pride; far from attributing any Thing to herself, or her own Merits, she humbly replies, *Behold t'e Handmaid of the Lord*, and in the same humble Manner expresses herself in the Canticle *Magnificat*: *Because he hath regarded the Humility of his Handmaid*. The sublime Dignity conferred upon her, did not render the blessed Virgin proud or vain. All the Titles she assumed was Servant or Handmaid; instructive Lesson; teaching us not to be puffed up, or pride ourselves on account of worldly Honours and Dignities, or to appropriate that to our own Merit, which is the pure Effect of God's Bounty and Liberality to us. Proud Sons of *Adam*! haughty Spans of living Earth! learn here what you ought to think of yourselves! The Mother of God the Queen of Heaven assumes no other Title than the poor Epithet of *Handmaid*. Vain and proud Mortals! blush and be confounded with Shame to see how far you degenerate from this glorious Example; you, who are so fond of empty Names, and glittering Titles of Honour, remember that Humility is the proper Character of a Christian, and absolutely necessary for every one, especially for those who are distinguished from others, by Honour, Title, and a high Station. All such ought to set this Example of the blessed Virgin before them, and endeavour to imitate her Humility: She was

humble, and we must be so too, or in vain we think to be acceptable to God, who *resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Humble.* St. Jac. Chap. iv. Ver. 6. Nothing gives a greater Lustre to Honours, Dignities, and a high Station than a Christian Humility, void of Scorn and Contempt of others. Thus the great Man, while great in the Eyes of the World, may be greater in the Sight of God, may maintain his Dignity, and live according to the Rank Providence has placed him in, enjoying the good Things of this Life, without forfeiting those of the next.

From the Example of the blessed Virgin we may also learn a due Submission and Resignation to the Will of God in all Things. She was no less submissive and resigned than she was humble. The Angel told her, she should conceive and bring forth a Son, and this to be without any Prejudice to her virginal Purity, and tho' she was unable to comprehend this Mystery, she captivated her Understanding, and submitted to God's Will with a most perfect Resignation: *Be it done unto me according to thy Word.* This dutiful Submission, and perfect Resignation to God's Will, made her so acceptable to him, that in return he conferred upon her the highest Dignity Omnipotence itself could bestow upon a pure Creature. The Holy Ghost overshadowed her, and she conceived in her Womb the holy Jesus, becoming a true Mother, and yet remaining a most pure and unspotted Virgin. Happy Effect of
Humility

Humility and Submission! from this Example of the blessed Virgin we may learn to submit to the Will of Heaven in all Occurrences of Life; and in every Thing to regard the good Pleasure of almighty God, and to let his holy Will be the *Norma* or Rule of all we do. In vain we think to please God, if we will not break our own Wills, and submit them to his. Obedience and Resignation are sure Marks of a true Christian; they are unerring Guides which will safely conduct us to eternal Bliss: At all Times, therefore, and upon all Occasions, let us say: *Be it done unto me, O Lord, according to thy Word.* This is not only our Duty, but is also our Interest, and we shall reap the Benefits of this Submission, and thereby engage God in our Favour, with whom nothing is impossible, nothing hard or difficult. His Power is equal to his Goodness, both infinite, and to him we may safely commit ourselves, and all our Concerns, and in all pressing and difficult Circumstances of Life rely upon his Goodness, his Power and his Promises. No seeming Impossibility no imaginary insuperable Difficulties ought to diminish this Confidence, for as nothing is impossible to God, so he can, and will order every Accident of Life for our greater Good, if we are not wanting to ourselves, and are, as we ought, dutifully submissive to him.

These are the practical Instructions the Church gives us from the Gospel of this Feast, and we then honour the blessed Virgin

78 *Annunciation of the B. V. Mar. 25.*

as we ought, and may hope to obtain the Benefit of her powerful Intercession, by endeavouring to imitate her Virtues : Serious Christians will make this their chief Care. Such, and such only, keep these Festivals according to the Spirit and Intention of the Church, and all such will undoubtedly receive the Advantages designed for them by these holy Institutions.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

Hail, dear Redeemer, Jesus Christ, thou Word made Flesh ! Praise, Honour and Glory be to thee, O Christ, who for our Sake didst descend from thy royal Seat in Heaven, from the Bosom of thy eternal Father into this Vale of Tears, and wouldst be conceived and made Man in the Womb of the Virgin *Mary*. Chuse, I beseech thee, O chuse to dwell in my Heart, and adorn it with all spiritual Graces. O that I could invite thee, dear Jesus ! into the House of my Soul by profound Humility, that I may receive thee with ardent Charity and inflamed Love, and having received thee may conserve and keep thee, and be so united to thee, that nothing may ever separate me from thee.

O God of infinite Love and Goodness ! what shall I say ? what Return can I make to thy Bounty ? How hast thou loved me, O thou most amiable and deserving Love ! and shall I not love thee again ? I will love thee, O my God ! I will love thee, who hast so
much

much loved me. I desire eternally to love thee, and for thyself alone, because thou art only worthy to be loved.

O that I could excite and stir up all Creatures to love thee! that I could make all created Beings praise thee and be grateful to thee as they ought! At least, O God of Love! let me love thee; and tho' Sinners forsake and offend thee, I will adhere to thee, and be inseparably joined to thee by the Bands of a most sincere and ardent Love.

Thus, O my God! will I daily Acknowledge my Obligations to thee. My whole Life shall be one continued Act of Gratitude to thee. I will die a thousand Times rather than wilfully offend thee by one mortal Sin, or abuse that Mercy and Goodness thou hast shewn to me.

Hail *Mary* full of Grace; our Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among Women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy Womb, Jesus. Holy *Mary*, Mother of God, pray for us Sinners, now and at the Hour of our Death. *Amen.*

Glorious Queen of Heaven! Blessed *Mary*! Mother of God! help me by your powerful Intercession. Obtain for me Pardon of all my Sins, and Grace to love God, and to honour you by a careful Imitation of your Virtues, O glorious, and ever blessed Virgin.

[80]

APRIL 23.

St. GEORGE, Martyr.

THIS glorious Saint and Martyr is supposed to have been a Native of *Cappadocia*, a Province of *Asia*, or, at least to have suffered Death there for the Christian Faith in the cruel Persecution of the Emperor *Dioclesian*, which began in the Year 303. The original Acts of the Martyrdom of St. *George*, like those of many other holy Martyrs are lost, by the Injury of Time. What we have certain of him, which is but little, from ecclesiastical History, is, that he was a Soldier by Profession, and bore Arms under *Dioclesian*, by whom he was much esteemed on Account of his military Courage and Valour, while he could serve his Prince without acting contrary to his Duty to God, he made no Scruple to bear Arms; but when he could not obey the Emperor without denying and abjuring his holy Faith, he cheerfully gave up all Pretensions to the Favour of his Prince, to all military Honours and Advancement, and readily chose to lose all and part with his Life than prove false to his Engagement, as a Christian, to Jesus Christ. Being detected, and accused to the Emperor for being a Christian, he was presented before that cruel Prince, who first endeavoured by Flatteries and great Promises to persuade him to deny Jesus Christ, and then threatened him with the most cruel and exquisite Torments, to
frighten

frighten him to a Compliance; but in vain. The holy Martyr, fortified by Grace, was immoveable; he despised the Emperor's Promises, and was no ways intimidated by his Threats. With undaunted Courage he beheld Death, tho' attended by the dreadful Apparatus of Racks, Scourges, Fire and all other Instruments of Cruelty. He was constant and firm to the End, and a glorious Martyrdom sent him to Heaven to receive the Reward of his Sufferings and Constancy.

As by what particular Kind of Death he suffered is not known, nor much of him that is certain and to be depended upon, no particular Lessons are assigned in the Second Nocturn of his Office, neither in the old Breviaries, nor in the new one of *Urban VIII.* but his Name is retained in the Calendar, and there are few Saints more celebrated either in the Eastern or Western Church. Many are the Churches dedicated to his Memory, and he has always been honoured and invoked as a powerful Protector against the Enemies of the Faith. As such, he is generally painted on Horseback killing a Dragon, and a Virgin by his Side; which is no more than a symbolical Representation of the Church, signified by the Virgin in Danger of being devoured by the Dragon, representing the Devil, but rescued and preserved by St. George, signifying all the holy Martyrs and glorious Champions of the Christian Faith, preserving and protecting her by their powerful Prayers and Intercessions for her.

82 St. GEORGE, Martyr. April 23.

In the *Roman* Breviary this Feast is a Semi-double, but in *England* it is kept as a Double of the first Class with an Octave, and is a Holiday of Obligation, being the ancient Patron of this Nation. His Courage in his military Profession, and Constancy in suffering for the Faith, have been, as we may suppose, the Cause why our Forefathers chose him for the Patron of *England*, as hoping by his holy Intercession to obtain of God a Blessing upon them in all their Affairs, and Success to their Arms. From the Example of this holy Saint and Martyr we may learn how to behave ourselves on all Occasions, with Courage and Constancy, as becomes Soldiers of Jesus Christ, and thereby overcome our spiritual Enemies, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

The GOSPEL. St. *John*, Chap. xv. Ver. 1.

I am the true Vine; and my Father is the Husbandman. 2. Every Branch in me not bearing Fruit, he will take it off, and every one that beareth Fruit he will prune it, that it may bring forth more Fruit 3. Now you are clean by reason of the Words I have spoken unto you. 4. Remain in me; and I in you. As a Branch cannot bear Fruit of itself, unless it abide in the Vine, so neither you, unless you abide in me. 5. I am the Vine, you are the Branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, bringeth forth much Fruit; for without me you can do nothing. 6. If any one remain

St. GEORGE, Martyr. *April 23.* 83

main not in me, he shall be cast away as a Branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather it up, and cast it into the Fire, and it shall burn. 7. If you remain in me, and my Words shall remain in you, you shall ask whatsoever you will, and it shall be granted to you.

REFLECTIONS.

In this Gospel our blessed Lord calls himself a Vine, and says of himself, that he is the true Vine, and that we are Branches. He is truly that Vine from whence has sprung all those fruitful Branches, the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, Widows, and holy Men and Women in all Ages, from the first planting of the Church till this present Time. *Without me, says he, you can do nothing.* As the Branches of a Vine draw all their Life and Nourishment from the Root, so, all Grace and Virtue is from Jesus Christ, without him we cannot do any good Thing, nor produce any Fruit of Virtue and Holiness. It is a great Happiness then to belong to this celestial Vine, and to be one of its Branches, but that we may reap the Fruit of this Happiness we must do our Endeavour to be Fruitful Branches bringing forth good Fruit, and therefore must remain in him, and be united to him by a lively and sound Faith in the Communion of his Catholic Church, wherein, by the Assistance of his Grace, we may flourish, and by the Practice of good Works shew we belong to him, for it
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84 St. GEORGE, Martyr. *April 23.*

is not only by Faith, or believing all that God has revealed, and his Catholic Church teaches, that we are to make appear that we are Branches of him the true Vine, but also by the Fruit we bring forth in a holy Life and Conversation, and by good Works joined to our Faith, without which Faith is dead, according to St. *James*, Chap. ii. Ver. 20. And to make us more seriously attend to this, Jesus Christ further tells us, that every Branch which beareth not Fruit shall be cut off and cast into the Fire. By this we may plainly see that something else is required of us besides an outward Profession of believing in Christ. We are Branches, and may be said to belong to the Vine, while we remain in the Communion of the Catholic Church, and profess to believe in Jesus Christ; but it is not enough to be a Branch, we must be Branches bearing good Fruit, or we shall be cut off and cast into the Fire. In vain we trust to a naked Faith or bare profession of the Gospel; for this will be of no Service to those who do not live according to the Maxims of the Gospel. To be in Jesus Christ, is to be a Christian, and as such to be a Branch of him the true Vine. But, how many Christians are there whose Lives are barren of good Works? How many, the Conduct of whom is directly contrary to the Precepts of Jesus Christ, and are Branches fit only to burn? Sinners are in the Church, they are of the Vine by an outward Profession of the true Faith, but being void of
Charity,

Charity, or good Works, are fruitless Parts of the Vine, and while they remain in this sad State of Sin, have Reason to apprehend being cut off and to be cast into the Fire. This deserves our serious Attention, and may sufficiently convince us of the great Mistake we are guilty of when we put our Confidence in Faith alone, or a Faith void of good Works.

We may further consider what our divine Master again says: Every one that beareth Fruit, he will prune it, that it may bring forth more Fruit. God would have us not only bear Fruit, but to bear it in Abundance, to become daily more and more fruitful; that is, we should not content ourselves with some low Degree of Virtue, but let it be our daily Desires and Endeavours to advance: for if we may believe *St. Bernard*, not to go forward in the Service of God, is to go backward. We must strive therefore to increase in Virtue, and for this End God prunes those Branches which bear, that they may bear more abundantly. To prune a Vine, is to cut off all the superfluous Branches, that too much Wood may not hinder the Fruit. Thus God does in the Soul of a good Christian, giving him Grace to cut off and retrench all vicious and inordinate Desires; to correct Imperfections, and to deprive himself of what corrupt Nature may require, and which does not tend to his Advancement in Virtue. By this pruning, like a well cultivated Vine, we may become exceeding fruitful in good Works, and be highly pleasing to God.

God. For this we ought to Labour, by making a right Use of those Graces and Favours God has bestowed upon us, *for to him that bath shall be given, and he shall abound.* St. Matt. Chap. xiii. Ver. 12. The surest Means to receive greater Degrees of Grace from God, is to improve what he has already given us. Grace is a Talent to be improved that we may be worthy to have it doubled, and thereby advance from one Degree of Virtue to another, till we are called to receive the happy Reward of our Labours. This all the Saints did. This that holy Saint and Martyr did, whose Feast the Church this Day celebrates. Let us follow his Example, and while we honour his Memory, imitate his Virtues, that we may be fruitful Branches of one and the same Vine with him.

When we consider what the holy Saints and Martyrs did, how strenuously they labour'd, and what excellent Fruit they brought forth, do we not from thence find the most encouraging Motives to imitate them. We are Branches of the same Vine; we are Members of the same holy Catholic Church, and profess the same holy Christian Faith. We have, and may have the same Assistance of divine Grace, for what they did was not of themselves, but by the Grace of God, and which he is always willing and ready to bestow upon us, and has promised to give it to those who ask. How unhappy then are all those careless and negligent Christians, who seem insensible
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St. GEORGE, Martyr. April 23. 87

of their own Interest as well as of their Duty ; and on whom these encouraging Motives have no Effect ! They are Branches, which, however green and pleasant they may appear, will be found of no Use or Value, or if they seem to bear any Fruit, it will prove small and sour, no ways agreeable or pleasing to God, the great Master of the Vine, who thus, by his Prophet, complains of such : *What more could I have done for my Vine, which I have not done ? And when I expected it should have brought forth good Grapes, it has brought forth sour Grapes. I will now shew you what I will do to my Vine : I will pluck up the Hedge that I have planted, and will leave it a Prey to all Passengers. It shall be no more cultivated ; and I will command the Clouds no more to rain upon it.* Isaias, Chap. v. Ver. 4, 56. The Meaning of this Threat is very obvious ; let us make a proper Application of it, and labour to be Branches, fruitful, bringing forth Fruit abundantly, good Fruit, and such as may cause the divine Husbandman to cultivate and prune them, so as to bring forth more Fruit, and daily to increase. Then shall we abide in the Vine, and be loved and cherished by him, as worthy of his Care and Esteem. Then shall we be truly happy, remaining in him and his Words remaining in us ; and whatever we shall ask it shall be granted to us.

A S P I-

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus, my adorable Saviour ! be thou in me, and may I be in thee the true Vine ! may thy Words remain in me, and may they be the only Rule of all my Actions, the End and Intent of all my Desires, that doing, and praying thro' thee I may obtain what I ask of thee.

Unite me to thee, dear Redeemer ! by those Bonds of Charity and Love which united all the holy Martyrs so closely to thee, that no Threats and Torments, no Caresses nor Promises, were able to separate them from thee, nor to hinder them from bringing forth good Fruit, because from thee, as from their Root, they received that Strength which sustained them under all Trials and Temptations.

O my God ! all my Force, and all my Strength ! without thee, alas ! I can do nothing ; without thee, what am I but a withered, dry Branch fit for nothing. Help me then, O thou my Strength, and all my Force ! assist me with thy holy Grace that nothing may divide or separate me from thee. O all my Hope and all my Desire ! when shall I be as a fruitful Vine pleasing to thee ? Lord, make me what thou desirest, and make me what thou wilt.

Thou hast given me this Desire, for every good Thought and Desire comes from thee, thou endless Source of all Good ! perfect what
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St. GEORGE, Martyr. April 23. 89

thou hast begun, for without thy assisting Grace we can do nothing. Thou hast said, *Ask whatever you will, and it shall be granted to you.* Let me not ask in vain, when I ask thy Grace to love and serve thee. By thy gracious Help and assistance I will constantly abide in thee, that thou mayest abide in me. Then shall my Soul flourish as a fruitful Branch, and be pleasing to thee. Then shalt thou nourish me with thy heavenly Benedictions. Then, O Son of Righteousness shalt thou cherish me with the warm Influence of thy Love, till I become ripe Fruit, and as such be gathered by thee.

And thou, O glorious Martyr of Jesus Christ ! holy Saint *George* ! who didst so courageously lay down thy Life for the Faith, and being watered with thy own Blood, didst bring forth good and much Fruit ; pray for me that I may do the same : Join your powerful Prayers to mine, and may I obtain what I ask by the Mercy of God, and your holy Intercession.

APRIL

A P R I L 25.

St. M A R K, Evangelist.

SAIN T *Mark*, one of the four Evangelists, was a Disciple of St. *Peter*, who in the End of his first Epistle calls him his Son, by way of Testimony of the great Affection and Regard he had for him. After the Conversion of St. *Paul*, he went with him to preach the Gospel in different Places ; being arrived at *Pamphylia*, he left the Doctor of the Gentiles and returned to *Jerusalem* ; and from thence went to *Antioch*, where St. *Paul* and St. *Barnabas* found him at their Return from *Syria* and *Cilicia*. St. *Paul* proposing, after a short Stay, to go and visit the other Churches, St. *Barnabas* would have taken the Evangelist with them, which St. *Paul* not consenting to, those two Apostles separated, and St. *Barnabas*, accompanied by St. *Mark*, sailed to *Cyprus*, from whence, probably after the Death of St. *Barnabas*, our Saint returned to *Jerusa'em*, and more closely attached himself to the Prince of the Apostles, whom he accompanied to *Rome*, and there writ his Gospel at the Request of the Christians of that place, which was approved by St. *Peter*, who sent him to *Egypt*, where he preached the Gospel and planted the Christian Faith in *Alexandria*, and was the first Bishop of that See, which having governed
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some Years with great Zeal, he received the Crown of Martyrdom, according to the Chronicle of *Alexandria*, in the eighth Year of the Emperor *Nero*.

This Festival is not a Holiday of Obligation, but is a Day of Devotion, being a Day of Abstinence (unless it fall in Easter-Week) and public Prayer and Supplication. The long Litanies being sung or said publicly in the Churches, with solemn Proceſſion in Catholic Countries to obtain the Bleſſing of Heaven upon the Fruits of the Earth, to appeaſe God's Anger provoked by our Sins, and to prevent all contagious and peſtilential Diſtempers. The obſerving this Festival as a Day of Abſtinence and public Supplications, was firſt ordered by St. *Gregory* the Great, as an Acknowledgment of the divine Mercy in putting a Stop to a very great Mortality in his Time at *Rome*.

On this Day we ought to join with the Church in her public Prayers, and implore the Mercy of God, and beg the Aſſiſtance of his Grace to preſerve us from Sin which provokes his Anger, and moves him to ſend his Scourges upon us, and that we may be careful to live according to the Maxims of that holy Goſpel delivered by St. *Mark*, and which we profeſs to believe.

The GOSPEL. St. *Luke*, Chap. x. Ver. 1.

After theſe Things the Lord appointed alſo other ſeventy-two, and ſent them two by two before
before

before him into every City and Place whither he himself was to come. 2. And he said to them, The Harvest indeed is great, but the Labourers few; pray the Lord of the Harvest that he send Workmen into the Harvest. 3. Go: Behold I send you as Lambs among Wolves. 4. Do not carry a Purse, nor Scrip, nor Shoes, nor salute any one by the Way. 5. Whatsoever House you shall enter into, first say, Peace be to this House. 6. And if a Son of Peace be there, your Peace shall rest upon him, but if not, it shall return unto you. 7. And make your Abode in the same House, eating and drinking such as they have; for the Labourer is worthy of his Hire. 8. And into what City soever you shall enter, and they shall receive you, eat of the Things that are set before you. 9. And heal the Infirm that are therein, and say to them, The Kingdom of God is come near unto you.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

The Evangelist, in this Gospel, relates that our blessed Saviour having chosen seventy-two Disciples besides the Apostle, sent them before him, as so many Precursors to prepare the Way for him, and to dispose the Jews to hearken to his divine Doctrine, and to receive him as their promised *Messias*. He gave them admirable Instructions how to behave themselves, and told them in the first Place that he sent them as Lambs among Wolves, signifying the
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the great Opposition and Persecution they were to meet with from the Scribes and Pharisees, and those obstinate Jews, who would not hearken to, nor receive them, against whom they were to oppose neither Arms, nor Resistance, nor any other Force than the Prudence of the Serpent, and the Simplicity of Doves; and by which they were to triumph over those Wolves, either by being above their Malice, or converting and changing them into Lambs.

These Instructions given by Christ to the Disciples, are an excellent and useful Lesson to every Christian, and from whence he may learn how to behave himself in the midst of a dangerous and wicked World, among those who are Enemies to Virtue and Piety. In these Circumstances a Christian stands in great need of, and must use the Prudence of the Serpent, and to that join the Simplicity of the Dove. A prudent Behaviour is necessary, that, directed by this Virtue, he may be so circumspect in all his Words and Actions, and so innocent in his Life and Conversation, that none may take any just Exceptions either to his Principles or Practice. Thus Catholics, who are obliged by their Circumstances to live and converse with those who are Enemies to their Faith, ought to be extremely cautious and circumspect over themselves, and endeavour, by a prudent Conduct, and a strictly exemplary Life, to stop the Mouths of those, who upon all Occasions cry out against the Church, and the professors of the Catholic Faith. By this Means

Means such may be more easily induced to lay aside their ill-grounded Prejudices, and entertain better and more just Notions of us when our Faith and our Practice correspond together, and we shew forth and adorn the true Faith we profess by the Innocence and Regularity of our Lives and Actions. Nothing can be a greater Absurdity, or a plainer Contradiction, than to boast of being a Member of the holy Catholic Church, and to profess the pure and holy Maxims of the Gospel, and to dishonour one, and contradict the other, by irregular and wicked Lives. Nothing gives the Enemies of Religion a greater Advantage, or strengthens more their Prejudices against it, than to see those, who outwardly and by Words profess it, in their Actions running counter to it. This ought to be seriously considered by every one who desires to be a Christian indeed, and to shew himself a true Disciple of Jesus Christ, who will one Day call every one to Account, not only as to his Faith, but more particularly as to his Practice, by which every one will be approved or condemned, and will be rewarded or punished according to their Works.

We may further observe, that in the Instructions given by Christ to his Disciples, he bids them carry neither Purse nor Scrip, by which he warned them against all superfluous Cares, and unnecessary Sollicitude for temporal Things, which might hinder them from a due Application to the Duties of their sacred Calling,

ling, and to be content with the Necessaries of Life, which will never be wanting to those who trust to the Providence of God. Our blessed Lord says, The Labourer is worthy of his Hire. Consequently to this, St. Paul declares, that those who serve the Altar ought to partake of the Altar. Nor need the Ministers of the Gospel fear wanting while they duly discharge their Duty. That Providence, which has engaged itself to support all Men, will not fail those who, for the Glory of God, and for the Service of the Church, have undertaken a State which excludes them from all Concern about Riches and wordly Greatness. This Consideration will justify to every unprejudiced Mind the Liberality of the Faithful to the Pastors of their Souls, and be a sufficient Vindication of the Piety of our Forefathers in their liberal Endowments, that those who preach Charity to others, might have it in their Power to do Charities themselves, and relieve the Poor. But these Instructions are not so peculiar to the Ministers of God's Church, as not to be applicable to others. All Christians are here admonished not to be too anxious and solicitous for the Goods of this World, for Riches and Abundance. It no ways becomes Christians to be altogether taken up with Cares for the Body, as if that alone was the End of our Creation and coming into the World. God who has created us will not fail to support and maintain that Being he has given us. We are allowed to

take a prudent Care, to labour every one, in his respective Station to maintain himself and those who depend upon him, but this must be done without too much Sollicitude, or any desponding Diffidence in God's Providence. While we rely upon him to bless our lawful and honest Endeavours, we shall never want what is necessary for us: And on whom can we rely with greater Security than on him? Since we can neither reasonably hope for, nor receive any Thing but from him who is the universal Provider and Maintainer of all Mankind, and taketh care of every one. He feeds the Fowls of the Air, he cloaths the Lillies of the Fields, nor will he suffer us to want what is necessary for the Support of our Life here. Away then all superfluous Care, and vain Sollicitude either for Food or Raiment. Let us expect them from God, and his Blessing upon our lawful Endeavours, and be content to receive them from him in that Measure he shall please to bestow them upon us. If he gives us Plenty and Abundance, let us thank him for his Bounty, and make a good Use of what he gives. If we have but little, let us not murmur nor repine, let us be content, and continue to place all our Trust and Confidence in him.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Saviour of the World! thou didst send
thy Disciples before thee to prepare thy Way.
Thou

Thou sendest to us the Ministers of thy holy Word to invite us to receive thee, and to hearken to thy sacred Truths. Dispose my Heart by the sweet and powerful Influence of thy Grace to hear thy Word, and obey it; that by Obedience to thy Call I may deserve to receive thee, and that thou mayest establish thy Kingdom in my Soul.

It is thy Gospel, O Jesus! that ought to be the Rule of our Conduct. Thou hast provided us Means, by the Ministers of thy holy Church, to understand the sacred Truths of it; but, alas! we too often find ourselves weak and feeble in the Practice of what we are taught and know; grant us then thy Assistance, that we may not only understand and know thy Will, but also perform and keep it.

O Jesus! Fountain of all true Wisdom, and Giver of all Virtues! Give me a necessary Prudence, and a holy Simplicity, void of all wordly Policy and Craft. May I be upright and sincere in all my Intentions, and innocent in all my Actions. Thou hast made me a Member of thy holy Catholic Church; my Faith is sound, and my Belief orthodox. This I owe to thy Goodness, perfect what thou hast begun, and let my Life and Actions be suitable to the holy Faith I profess, that I may edify my Neighbour by good Example, promote thy Honour and Glory, and secure my own eternal Happiness.

Holy Evangelist, *St. Mark*, faithful Disciple of Jesus Christ! intercede for me, and by

98 S. Philip and S. James. May 1.

your holy Prayers obtain for me what I now humbly ask, ardently to love, and faithfully to serve God in this World to the last Moment of my Life, that with you, and all the Saints, I may enjoy him in the next.

M A Y 1.

S. PHILIP, and S. JAMES, *Apostles.*

ST. *Philip* was born at *Bethsaida*, a City of *Galilee*, and was one of the first called by our blessed Saviour, and chosen afterwards to be of the Number of the twelve Apostles. Jesus Christ, soon after his Temptation in the Desert, walking through *Galilee*, found St. *Philip*, and said to him, *follow me*. St. *Philip* immediately obeyed, and not contented thus himself to follow Christ, but overjoyed to have found the *Messias*, he imparted the good News to his Friend *Nathaniel*, and brought him to Jesus. It is the general Opinion, supported by the Authority of several antient Fathers, that *Nathaniel* is the same Person as St. *Bartholomew*, one of the twelve Apostles. The prompt Obedience St. *Philip* paid to Christ's Call was recompensed and approved by his being chosen into the Apostolic College, and made one of the Twelve. Our blessed Lord seems to have had a peculiar Regard for him, and to have shewn a particular Familiarity to him;

him; and we read in the Gospel of St. *John*, Chap. vi. that Jesus Christ designing by a wonderful Miracle to feed five thousand Men, he first asked St. *Philip* where they might procure Bread for so great a Multitude. Another Time, some Gentiles desiring to see Christ, for that Purpose, first address'd themselves to St. *Philip*, as to a familiar Disciple of Jesus, who with St. *Andrew* spoke to our blessed Saviour for them.

This Apostle, after the Ascension of his Divine Master, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost, like the rest applied himself with Zeal and Fervour to the Duties of his Apostleship, and boldly preached the Name of Jesus to the Jews in *Jerusalem*, and the adjacent Parts; and when St. *Peter* and the rest of the Apostles separated and left *Jerusalem*, in order to preach the Gospel to all Nations, *Scythia* fell to the Share of St. *Philip*, who, after many Labours and Fatigues, arrived there, and soon found a large Field for his Apostolic Labours. Nothing daunted at the Difficulty of the Enterprize, nor deterred by any Danger, he sedulously applied himself to the arduous Task. He boldly preached the Knowledge and Worship of one true God and Jesus Christ crucified, to a rude and barbarous Nation; among whom, by the Fervour of his Preaching, by the admirable Sanctity of his Life, and by the Miracles he wrought, he planted the Christian Faith, and converted the *Scythians* to the Law of Christ, and taught them to submit their fierce

100 S. Philip and S. James. May 1.

Necks to his sweet and gentle Yoke. Having spent some Years in these Apostolic Labours, the Increase of Christianity procured a Persecution against it from the Heathen Priests, and those who were attached to their antient Idolatry and Superstition. The principal Person aimed at in this Persecution, and whose Death the Pagans chiefly desired, was St. *Philip*. Him they seized, and having first crucified him, they then stoned him to Death and sent his happy Soul to Heaven, there to receive the Recompence of his zealous Labours, thus terminated by a glorious Martyrdom at *Hieropolis*, but in what Year is uncertain.

Saint *James*, surnamed the Just, and called also the Younger, to distinguish him from the other St. *James*, was a near relation to our blessed Lord; and, according to the *Hebrew* Style, named his Brother. The Surname of Just was given to him on account of his eminent Sanctity and Piety. He was a Person of extraordinary Mortification, having from his Childhood abstained from all strong Liquors, and never eat Flesh, nor ever shaved, bathed, or anointed himself; by long and continual Prayer his Knees became as hard as a Camel's Skin; and so great a Veneration had the Jews for him, that, by a peculiar Privilege, he was permitted to enter the *Sanctum Sanctorum* of the Temple. He was chosen by Jesus Christ to be one of the twelve Apostles, and our blessed Lord, after his Resurrection, favoured him with a particular Apparition. After the
Ascension

Ascension of Jesus Christ, he was made the first Bishop of *Jerusalem*, and assisted at the Council held there by the Apostles, about the Law of Circumcision, and whether the Gentiles were obliged to observe it, wherein, following the Opinion of the Prince of the Apostles, he declared they were not. Some Time after he wrote an excellent Epistle to all the Faithful, which the Church retains in her Canon of Scripture, wherein he evidently shews the Necessity of good Works, without which he declares Faith to be dead. Having governed the See of *Jerusalem* with great Wisdom and Prudence thirty Years, in the ninety sixth of his Age, he received the Crown of Martyrdom. His admirable Sanctity and great Zeal had brought over a great Number of the Jews to the Faith of Christ, but drew upon himself the Anger and Resentment of the High-Priest, Scribes, and Pharisees, who could not bear the growing Progress of the Christian Church, and having been disappointed in their Design of murdering St. Paul, turned their Rage against St. James. Festus, the Roman Governor being dead, and his Successor Albinus not arrived at *Jerusalem*, Annanus, who was then High-Priest, Son to Annas, who with Caiaphas, had procured the Crucifixion of Christ, seeing himself Master in *Jerusalem*, took that Opportunity to destroy St. James. For this End he got him up to the Battlements of the Temple, under Pretence that he might preach to the Jews, who at that Time, being

102 S. Philip and S. James. May 1.

the Feast of the Passover, were in great Numbers at *Jerusalem*. To them the holy Apostle with a loud Voice declared Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, and the promised *Messias*. This enraged the Sadducees, of whose Sect the High-Priest *Ananias* was, and by whose cruel Orders the Saint was thrown over the Battlements, by which both his Legs were broke, and as the holy Man lay expiring on the Ground praying for his Murderers, one of them with a Fuller's Club dashed out his Brains, and finished his Martyrdom. He suffered in the seventh Year of the Emperor *Claudius*, and in the 60th of Jesus Christ.

The GOSPEL. St. John. Chap. xiv. Ver. 1.

Let not your Hearts be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me. 2. In my Father's House are many Mansions, if not, I would have told you; because I go to prepare a Place for you. 3. And if I go, and prepare a Place for you, I will come again, and will take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also. 4. And you know whither I am going, and you know the Way. 5. *Thomas* saith to him, Lord, we know not whither thou art going, and how can we know the Way? Jesus saith to him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. 6. No Man cometh to the Father but by me. 7. If you had known me, doubtless you would also have known my Father; and from henceforth you shall know him, and you have

S. Philip and S. James. May 1. 103

have seen him. 8. *Philip* saith to him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it suffices us. 9. Jesus answered him; so long Time have I been with you, and you have not known me? *Philip*, he who seeth me, seeth also the Father; how dost thou say, shew us the Father? 10. Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The Words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father remaining in me, he doth the Works. 11. Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? 12. Believe at least on account of the Works themselves. *Amen, Amen*, I say unto you, he that believeth in me, the Works that I do, he also shall do, and greater than these he shall do; because I go to the Father. 13. And whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my Name, this I will do.

REFLECTIONS.

Our blessed Lord having frequently mentioned to his Apostles his Passion and the Sufferings he was to undergo; having also told them he was about to leave them, and that after his Departure from them, they should meet with great Hardships, and severe Persecutions; they were filled with Sorrow and Concern. They loved their Divine Master with a tender and sincere Affection, and the Thoughts of being deprived of his blessed Company, and the Sufferings they were to endure, cast a melancholy Damp upon their Spirits, and made them sad. To Comfort

them, and to raise up their dejected Minds, Jesus Christ told them it was necessary he should leave them for a Time, but that he would come again, and then their Sorrow should be turned into Joy; and that when he went from them by his Ascension, it would be to prepare a Place for them in Heaven, that they might be there eternally happy with him. *Let not your Hearts be troubled, in my Father's House are many Mansions. I go to prepare a Place for you; and from whence my corporal Absence will be abundantly supplied by my daily spiritual Presence and Assistance even to the End of the World; and all your Sufferings shall be fully recompensed by that Glory and Happiness which shall be conferred upon you in my Father's House. Let not your Hearts be troubled, in my Father's House there are many Mansions, into which you shall be received.*

These comfortable Words our Saviour spoke to his Apostles, and they are no less comfortable to all pious and good Christians who here labour under Trouble and Affliction. To all such Christ says, *Let not your Hearts be troubled.* If we consider ourselves, as justly we may, in this World as in a Valley of Miseries and Troubles of various Kinds exposed to many Temptations and Dangers, subject to almost innumerable Calamities and Misfortunes, surrounded, as it were, with formidable Enemies, in a Place of Banishment from our only true Country, Heaven. This Consideration

sideration may justly trouble us, and make us grieve and mourn; yet not to grieve too much, nor to give way to Despondency, but like true Disciples, and heroic Soldiers of Jesus Christ, to support all those Troubles and Difficulties, with a chearful Patience and Resignation. In order to this, let us frequently raise up our Thoughts to Heaven, whither Jesus Christ is ascended, and gone to prepare a Place for us, and where we shall one Day happily arrive, if we faithfully persevere in his Service, and where all our Labours, all our Sufferings will be abundantly recompensed by a glorious and just Reward proportioned to the Zeal and Fervour we have shewn in the Service of God, in whose Heavenly House are many Mansions, There is Room and Happiness for every one, and every one shall there be placed according to his Deserts. Let not therefore our Hearts be troubled, nor sink under the Weight of any Affliction or Trouble we may here meet with, being assured by St. Paul, that *the Sufferings of this World are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us in the next.* Rom. Chap. viii. Ver. 18. And the same Apostle tells us, that *our light Afflictions here will work for us a more exceeding Weight of Glory hereafter.* 2. Cor. Chap. iv Ver. 17. What Encouragement is this, Christians! and how ought it to raise our Hearts and Minds above this World, and all that is in it? How contemptible all its seeming Pleasure and Ease? How little to be feared all its Sorrow and Pain, where

when we consider Heaven, that eternal Mansion of Rest and Joy! Nature, corrupt Nature, may prompt us to mourn and grieve, but Grace and a Trust in the Promises of Jesus Christ will support us, and change all our Sufferings into Comfort and Joy.

But while we consider these encouraging Words of our blessed Saviour in order to raise up our Hearts and Desires towards Heaven, it is necessary we should likewise observe what he further says in this Gospel; *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one cometh to the Father but by me.* Here he gives us clearly to understand, that no one will ever be admitted into his Father's House, Heaven, who does not endeavour to arrive there, by walking in the true and only Way which leads to it; that is, by following Jesus Christ, who, as he says of himself, is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is the only true Way, and which we are not to look at by Speculation or Belief only, but must walk in by a practical Observance of what he teaches. When the young Man in the Gospel desired to know what he was to do in order to obtain eternal Life, our blessed Lord said to him; *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* This is an absolutely necessary Condition, and required of every one who desires to partake of eternal Happiness, and from hence we may judge of ourselves, by examining our own Conduct, how far we do, or do not follow Christ, who is the Way, or whether

S. Philip and S. James. *May 1.* 17

ther by wilfully sinning, we do not walk out of this necessary and sure Way, and run into the dangerous By-Paths of the World. As this is a Point of the greatest Importance, as often as we read, or hear what Christ says; *I am the Way*, we ought seriously to consider whether we are in this Way, if not, to turn into it immediately, lest by continuing to wander from him, we come to be irrecoverably lost.

Christ says further of himself, that he is the Truth. He is the only unerring and infallible Truth, incapable of deceiving us, or being deceived by us. This, as Christians, we are bound to confess, the necessary and natural Consequence of which, is to believe what he says. When therefore he says, that no one cometh to the Father but by him; on what can we ground our Hopes and Expectations of being admitted into Heaven, but by walking in Christ, the true Way? All Hopes built upon any other Foundation are vain and illusory, and will fatally prove so to those who imagine ever to get to Heaven, while they continue to walk in the Ways of the World. Christ bids us walk in the strait Way, and tells us, that narrow is the Way, and strait is the Gate which leads to Life. To walk in the broad Way, is directly to contradict him, and practically to disbelieve what he says. What is this but to give the Lie to our Profession, and thereby wilfully to exclude ourselves from the House of his Father, the eternal Mansions of Bliss?

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Our blessed Lord not only says, that he is the Way and the Truth, but also that he is the Life. He is the Author and Giver of Life to every one who believes in him, and keeps his Words; and he desires nothing more than that every one may come to, and enjoy this Life; for this has he mercifully shewn us the Way to it, and proposes to us the easy Conditions on which it is to be obtained: Such Conditions, that if it had been left to our own Choice, we could not have desired any more easy and more reasonable. His Commandments are not hard or grievous, and his Yoke is truly sweet, and his Burden light. Let us walk then, Christians, in this pleasant and easy Way, the Way of Truth and Holiness, which will conduct us to eternal Life. If you apprehend any Difficulty from your own frail and weak Nature, or from the Attacks of your spiritual Enemies, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, have Recourse to God for the Assistance of his powerful Grace. This, if you ask, you will receive, and to encourage us to ask, we may reflect upon Christ's Promise to his Apostles, a Promise not only made to them, but likewise to all good Christians. *Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my Name, this will I do* Excellent Encouragement to beg for what we want, having this Assurance of obtaining our Request! Are we apprehensive of our Weaknesses? let us ask the Father in Christ's Name, and he will strengthen us. Do our Enemies, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, appear
formi-

formidable? Are their Attacks violent? let us not lose Courage; but call upon the Father in Christ's Name, and he will come to our Assistance, and deliver us, and we shall become more than conquerors. *Fear not*, says Christ to his Disciples, *I have overcome the World*, St. John, Chap. xvi. While God is with us, we may truly say with the Prophet, *There are more with us, than against us*, 2 Reg. Chap. vi. Let not then our Hearts be troubled, since we may have Access to God the Father, through his Son Jesus Christ, and by asking in his Name whatever we want, shall undoubtedly receive it.

ASPIRATIONS.

O Jesus! eternal Truth, and everlasting Life! I desire nothing more than to come to thee. I acknowledge, O Saviour of the World, that thou art the true and only Way; the only certain and sure Truth, and the only desirable and eternal Life. Ah, my God! if I walk not in this Way, I shall soon lose myself: If I follow not this Truth, I shall run into dangerous Errors, and be irrecoverably lost. O thou true Light, which lights every one who comes into the World! Illuminate my Understanding, that I may know thee; clear the Eyes of my Soul, that I may behold thee, and inflame my Heart, that I may love thee. May I run after thee in the Odour of thy Sweetness! May I walk after thee in the Paths of thy holy Com-

110 S. Philip and S. James. *May 1.*

Commandments, that I may one Day come for ever to enjoy thee, who art eternal Life.

O Jesus! the Way, the Truth, and the Life! Bring me by this Way to that eternal Life of which thou art the Author and the Giver. O Lord! thou art the true Life, a never-ending Life, and by thee only can we obtain Life. O Life-giving Life! bring me to the Possession of thee, that I may be happy in thee. May I live to thee, O only Life of my Soul! and die to all Things but thee. May I die to the World, and all its false and sinful Pleasures. May I die to all unlawful Enjoyments of Sense; to all earthly Satisfactions, that my Heart and my Affections may be placed on thee alone. Thou art Light, thou art Truth, and thou art Life. Thou art Light, and in thy Light I shall see that Light which will guide me in the right Way. Thou art Truth, and by hearkening to, and following thee, I shall not err, nor be deceived. Thou art Life, and in thee I shall live for ever.

And you, O holy Apostles, St. *Philip*, and St. *James*, pray for me. I humbly beg your Intercession; obtain for me what I stand in need of, and what I ask. Obtain for me those Graces and Virtues which may make me pleasing to my God; that I may ardently love him above all Things, and eternally enjoy him in Heaven.

M A Y

M A Y 3.

Invention of the Holy Cross.

THIS Festival is an annual Commemoration of the sacred Cross of Jesus Christ being found by St. *He'en* in the Year 326, about 180 Years after it had been buried by the Heathens. St. *He'en* was Mother to the first Christian Emperor, *Constantine the Great*, who, about to give Battle to *Maxentius*, beheld in the Air a bright Cross with this Inscription. *In hoc Signo vinces. In this Sign thou shalt overcome.* *Constantine*, encouraged by this Vision, took the Cross for his Standard, overthrew *Maxentius*, and became thereby sole Master of the *Roman Empire*. Soon after he declared himself *Christian*, and restored Peace and Tranquility to the Church, which had been oppressed by frequent and the severest Persecutions for 300 Years. This was about the Year 312. Fourteen Years afterwards, St. *Helen* went to *Jerusalem*, in order to find the Cross on which our Saviour was crucified. To this she was encouraged by a Vision, and being arrived at *Jerusalem*, was conducted by St. *Macarius*, Bishop of that See, to Mount *Calvary*, where she found a Marble Statue of *Venus*, set up by the Heathens to obliterate the Memory of Christ's Passion. The pious Empress ordered the Statue to be taken

112 **Invention of the Holy Cross.**

taken away, and broke to Pieces, and then made some Workmen dig in the Place where it had stood: Having dug pretty deep, they found the Cross of Christ, with those of the two Thieves, who were crucified with him. They also found the Nails, and the Title which had been fixed to our Lord's Cross. *St Helen* was overjoyed to find the sacred Treasure, but this Joy was immediately and in a great Measure damped by a Doubt occurring to know which of the three was the Cross of Christ. This Difficulty was removed, and the true Cross made known by a wonderful Miracle. *St. Macarius* having prayed to God, ordered a Woman to be brought who was at the Point of Death by a dangerous Distemper, and first laid upon her the two other Crosses without any Change: But no sooner had the Cross of our Saviour touched her, when she was instantly restored to perfect Health, to the inexpressible Satisfaction of the Empress, the Bishop, and all present. The pious Princess immediately ordered a magnificent Church to be there built, wherein the holy Cross was deposited, which the Bishops of *Jerusalem* afterwards exposed to the Veneration of the Faithful with great Solemnity every *Good-Friday*. The *Roman Breviary* mentions that *St. Helen* sent Part of the Cross to the Emperor her Son at *Rome*, who built there a stately Church in Honour of it under the Title of *The Holy Cross in Jerusalem*, where the sacred Relick was kept with great Respect and Veneration. From that Time
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the religious Emperor forbid any Criminal to be crucified, and the Cross which before was looked upon as vile and contemptible, became a just Subject of religious Honour and Respect.

This Feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross is celebrated by the *Greeks* in the Paschal Time, on the third Day after the Feast of the Resurrection. In the *Latin Church* on the 3d of *May*, and was instituted by Pope *Sylvester*. Pope *Clement VIII.* placed it among the Doubles of a second Class and changed the Antiphons at Lauds to the same with those of the Exaltation, the former ones containing something that was historical but dubious. *Gavant. Com. in Rub. Sect. 7. C. 7.*

The GOSPEL. St. *John*, Chap. iii. Ver. 1.

And there was a Man of the Pharisees called *Nicodemus*, one of the Chief of the Jews. 2. This Man came to Jesus by Night, and said to him, We know that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no one can do the Works that thou dost, unless God was with him.

3. Jesus answered him, Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. 4. *Nicodemus* saith to him, how can a Man be born when he is old? can he return a second Time into his Mother's Womb, and be born again? 5. Jesus replied, Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a Man be born again of Water, and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom
dom

114 Invention of the Holy Crofs.

dom of God. 6. That which is born of the Flesh is Flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. 7. Wonder not that I said to thee, You must be born again. 8. The Spirit breatheth where it will; and thou hearest his Voice, but knowest not whence he cometh, nor whither he goeth: so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit. 9. *Nicodemus* answered, and said to him, How can these Things be. 10. Jesus replied and said to him, art thou a Master in *Israel*, and knowest not these Things. 11. Amen, amen, I say to thee, that we speak what we know, and testify what we have seen, and you receive not our Testimony. 12. If I have spoke to you earthly Things, and you believe not, how will you believe if I speak to you heavenly Things? 13. And no one hath ascended into Heaven, but he that descended from Heaven, the Son of Man who is in Heaven. 14. And as *Moses* raised up the Serpent in the Desert, so must the Son of Man be raised up. 15. To the end that every one who believeth in him should not perish, but should have Life everlasting.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

In this Conversation of *Nicodemus* with Jesus Christ, as related by the Evangelist, we may observe that the Jewish Rabbi came to our Saviour by Night, for fear lest, being a Doctor of the Law, he should be observed, and
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bring upon himself the Resentment of the Scribes and Pharisees. Human Considerations are great Obstacles to a thorough Conversion, and often hinder us from coming to God as we ought. Christ was pleased to condescend to the Weakness of *Nicodemus*, and admitted him to his Conversation in the Night-time, and instructed him in many Points which he not understanding, our blessed Lord gently reprehended his Slowness of Comprehension, and continued his Instructions till *Nicodemus* became his Disciple, and afterwards spoke openly in Defence of Jesus Christ, when the High-Priests and Pharisees sent Officers to apprehend him. And when our Saviour was crucified, he assisted at taking him down from the Cross with the devout *Joseph of Arimathea*, without any Fear or Apprehension of the Jews.

There are many who seem desirous to come to God, but would do it privately, and in the Night-time as it were, that it might not expose them to be talked of, or to be ridiculed, There are many who tho' convinced of the Truth, yet are fearful to profess it openly, on account of temporal Inconveniences which may follow. Perhaps in some Cases a little Allowance may be given to this human Weakness in the Beginning of a Conversion, but it must be laid aside afterwards, nor must we be ashamed of the Truth nor of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For he has said, *He that shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words, of him the Son of Man shall be ashamed when he shall come in his Majesty.*

116 Invention of the Holy Cross.

Majesty. St. Luke, Chap. ix. Ver. 26. This Timidity and Fearfulness is very unbecoming a Christian, or a Disciple of Jesus Christ. It shews a Heart too much bent upon the World, and a Want of a right Disposition to leave all to follow Christ. It is also unreasonable, for what can be more so, than out of Fear of some temporal Loss, to hazard an eternal one? In reality, what have we to be afraid of? What can the World, that is, the Enemies to Truth and Virtue, what can they do to us? They may laugh at and ridicule us for being virtuous, or following the Dictates of our Conscience in embracing Truth, the Laugh and Ridicule will turn upon themselves, and give us an Opportunity of shewing a superior Spirit, a Mind above all little and low Prejudices. But we may be persecuted, we may suffer in our Goods or Fortunes. If we do, the Loss will be abundantly repaired, and I suppose there is no Christian but will own that to lose a little here, and gain Heaven hereafter is not Loss but great Gain. Indeed, to those whose narrow Views are confined to Earth, and who care not to look beyond the Grave, every Loss, every Suffering, may appear dreadful, but not to a good Christian. Such a one looks deeper into Things of this Moment; he weighs Heaven and Earth, Time and Eternity, in the Balance of the Sanctuary, and from thence judges of the true Worth of one, and the other, and willingly suffers any Loss here that he may be happy hereafter.

Another

Another Important Instruction from this Gospel is given to us in these Words of Christ : *Unless a Man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* A new Birth is absolutely necessary to become Children of God, and Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. This spiritual or new Birth we receive in the Sacrament of Baptism, whereby we are regenerated to God, and freed from the Guilt of original Sin, and become Children of the Light, and are joined to Christ, our Head, as Members of his mystical Body, receiving also a Character or Mark by which we are known to belong to him, and which Character shall never be blotted out, but remain always in us. Happy Consequences ! happy Effects of this new Birth ! the Consideration of which may justly fill us with the most grateful Sentiments, the warmest Sense of the Favour, and our Obligations to God for his Mercy in conferring it upon us. The Result of which Consideration ought to be a Resolution to walk worthy of that Light to which we are called, and to live as becomes Children of God, by not dying again by Sin after we have been thus spiritually born. In order to strengthen ourselves in this Resolution, let us frequently call to mind the solemn Engagements we entered into at our Baptism, when we renounced the Devil and all his Works, the Poms and Vanities of the World, and all the sinful Delights of the Flesh. We then engaged ourselves in the Service of God, and listed ourselves Soldiers of Jesus Christ.

To

118 Invention of the Holy Cross.

To him therefore we belong, and not to the World, and ought to serve him with that Fidelity he justly expects and requires of us.

We renounced to the Devil as an Enemy to God, and the declared Enemy of our Souls. Have we then any thing to do with him? Shall we do his Works by living in Sin? To do so, is to be highly perfidious, highly ungrateful; and what can we expect will be the Consequences of thus breaking our solemn Promises? We renounced to the Pumps and Vanities of the World; and shall we wilfully run after them, and seek for nothing but to enjoy them? We have renounced to all the sinful Delights of the Flesh; can we so far forget ourselves, our Duty and Obligations, as to abandon ourselves to shameful and forbidden Pleasures? Spiritually born to God, and thereby consecrated to him, shall we dare wilfully to defile these sacred Temples by Sin, and drive his holy Spirit from us? Ah Christians! let us think, and think seriously of this, and never be guilty of so base a Perfidiousness.

In Baptism we were marked with the sacred Sign of the Cross, the Standard and Banner of Jesus Christ, under which we were enrolled as his Soldiers, to fight against his and our Enemies, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. If we prove false to our Engagements, the indelible Character we then received and which was imprinted on us, will be an eternal Mark and Reproach to, our Infidelity. From
These

- these Considerations we may learn how much it concerns us to be extremely careful in what is of so great Importance to us, and to make it our daily Care to preserve that spiritual Life we have received; to co-operate with the Grace bestowed upon us, that we may be acknowledged as his true Children by our heavenly Father, and one Day happily see and enjoy the glorious Kingdom of God.

ASPIRATIONS.

Adorable Saviour of the World ! how infinitely am I obliged to thee for the Favour thou hast done me in bringing me to this holy Sacrament of Baptism, by which I have been spiritually born, and made one of thy Children. I praise and bless thee, O my God, for thy Goodness. O may I never be ungrateful to thee, or abuse thy Bounty !

O my great and sovereign Lord, with whom I have made so solemn a Covenant ! shall I forget all my Promises to thee, and run after the vain and sinful Pleasures of this World, the wretched Delights of the Flesh, and thereby side with thy Enemy the Devil ? Ah, no ; let me die first and be annihilated. My God ! I esteem it my highest Honour and Happiness to be one of thy Children, and to belong to thee, and desire nothing more than to continue faithful to thee. And therefore do I now with all possible Sincerity renew those Promises I made in Baptism. I do now again renounce

H

to

to the Devil, to all his Works and Poms. I resolve to have no Commerce with those Enemies of God and my Soul. To God alone I will live, and him only will I serve.

JUNE II.

St. BARNABY, Apostle.

THIS holy Apostle was originally of the Isle of *Cyprus*, and of the Tribe of *Levi*, called at first *Joseph*, but received from the Apostles the Name of *Barnabas* or *Barnaby*, which signifies a Son of Consolation, perhaps, because he had a particular Talent in comforting the Afflicted. He is supposed to have been one of the seventy-two Disciples our blessed Saviour chose, and sent to preach in the Cities and Towns of *Judea*. The holy Scripture gives him this Character, that he was a good Man, full of Faith and the Holy Ghost. *Acts*, Chap. xi. After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, he sold his Patrimony, and laid the Price of it at the Apostles Feet. It was he who presented *St. Paul* to the Apostles, and informed them of his miraculous Conversion. Some Disciples having preached the Gospel with great Success at *Antioch*, the Apostles sent *St. Barnaby* thither, who confirmed the new Converts in the Faith, and by his zealous Labours very much

much increased their Number. Having staid some Time there, he went to *Tarsus*, to meet St. Paul, and brought that Apostle with him to *Antioch*, where they jointly laboured in preaching the Gospel for a Year. There, and at that Time, the Faithful began to be called Christians.

The Prophet *Azabus* coming to *Antioch* and foretelling a severe Famine, the Christians there made a charitable Collection for the poor Believers at *Jerusalem*, and sent it by St. Paul and St. Barnaby. At their Return, the Holy Spirit having ordained that they should be set apart and deligned for the Ministry to which he had called them, they received Imposition of Hands, and were sent from *Jerusalem* to preach the Gospel, and went to *Seleucia*, from thence to the Island of *Cyprus*, and preached in the Synagogues at *Salamine*, and in the City of *Paphos*. Having travelled thro' several Provinces, and preached the Faith of Christ with great Success, they returned to *Jerusalem*, and assisted at the Council held there; after which they were sent again to *Antioch* to make known to the faithful Gentiles there, and of *Syria* and *Cilicia*, the Decree which the Apostles had made concerning the Observation of the Law of *Moses*. Being returned to *Antioch*, after a short Stay there, St. Paul proposed to go and visit the other Churches; this St. Barnaby consented to, but was desirous to take with him St. Mark, which St. Paul opposed on account of the Evangelist's having left them before at

Pamphylia, to return to *Jerusalem*. St. *Barnaby* persisting in his Design, the two Apostles separated. St. *Paul* taking with him *Silas*, went into *Syria* and *Cilicia*, confirming the Churches there. St. *Barnaby*, accompanied by St. *Mark*, sailed to *Cyprus*, where it is supposed he remained till the seventh Year of the Emperor *Nero*, when to the Labours of his Apostleship he joined the Crown of Martyrdom. Under the Empire of *Zeno*, in the Year 485, his Body was found in the Isle of *Cyprus*, with the Gospel of St. *Matthew* on his Breast, which St. *Barnaby* had transcribed with his own Hand.

The GOSPEL. St. *Matt.* Chap. x. Ver. 16.

Behold I send you as Sheep in the Midst of Wolves. Be therefore prudent as Serpents, and simple as Doves. 17. And take heed of Men for they will deliver you up in Councils, and scourge you in their Synagogues. 18. And you shall be brought before Governors and Kings for my Sake, for a Testimony to them, and to the Gentiles. 19. But when they shall deliver you up, be not thoughtful how or what to speak, for at that same Hour shall be given you what you are to speak. 20. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of the Father that speaketh in you. 21. The Brother also shall deliver up his Brother, and the Father his Son to Death, and Children shall rise up against their Parents and put them to Death

22. And you shall be hated of all Men on account of my Name: but he that shall persevere to the End shall be saved.

REFLECTIONS.

In this Gospel we may consider Jesus Christ sending his Apostles to preach the Gospel, and telling them of the great Persecutions and Sufferings they should meet with; but, at the same Time he encourages and bids them not be afraid, assuring them of his Assistance, and that the Holy Spirit should speak for and instruct them. This they afterwards experienced, and thereby boldly preached the Name of Jesus, not regarding the Threats of the High-Priests and Elders, but rejoiced to suffer for the Name of Christ; and with the same Constancy laid down their Lives, and endured Martyrdom for the Christian Faith. Their holy Successors and the Faithful met with the same Trials in the first Ages of the Church, during several severe Persecutions, when, what our blessed Saviour says in this Gospel, was literally fulfilled: *The Brother shall deliver up his Brother, and the Father his Son to Death, and Children shall rise up against their Parents, and put them to death.* Many Examples of this are to be met with in the Acts of the primitive Martyrs. The Case of St. Barbara, who was accused and put to Death by her own Father. The Case of St. Tere'sa, and many others whose nearest Relations and Friends were their great-

est Persecutors; and tho' it may seem hard to be persecuted by our own Friends and Relations on account of the true Faith, yet it is what the Disciples and Followers of Jesus must sometimes expect; and he has said, *Whoever loves Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me.* St. Matt. chap. x. If we cannot profess, or embrace the true catholic Faith without incurring the Displeasure of our Parents and dearest Friends, we must submit to their Persecutions how violent soever, and this, not only in regard of Faith, but also in the Practice of Virtue, Justice and Piety; for it may sometimes happen that herein we meet with the greatest Obstacles from those who are most near and dear to us. In such Circumstances we must encourage ourselves by the Promises of Christ, and not for Fear of displeasing our Friends depart from our Duty, but persevere to the End, that we may be saved, and obtain the promised Crown of eternal Life.

It is Perseverance that must crown our Works, both in confessing the true Faith, and in the Practice of all moral Virtues and Duties. He that shall persevere to the End, shall be saved, says Jesus Christ; and, in another Place, *Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that does the Will of my Father who is in Heaven.* St. Matt. chap. vii. Ver. 21. To do the Will of God, is an absolutely necessary Condition to be saved; and it is the Will of God, that we confess him before Men, not only

only with our Lips, but by the daily Actions of our Lives ; not only in Times of Peace and Tranquillity, but also in Times of Persecution, and when so doing may expose us to great Dangers and Losses, and this not for once or twice, but always, as long as we live. *He that putteth his Hand to the Plough and looketh back, is not worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven.* St. Luke, Chap. ix. Ver. 62. By putting our Hand to the Plough is signified our entering into the Service of God ; and by looking back is understood falling from, and growing weary of the Practice of Virtue, and returning to the Service of the World. All such are pronounced by Christ unworthy of the Kingdom of God, and will be sent away with, *Nescio vos, I know you not.* St. Matt. Ch. xxv. V. 12. Hence St. Paul compares Christians to those who run a Race, or strive for a Prize, and bids us so run as we may obtain, which we shall never do, unless we hold out and persevere to the End. A Traveller who grows weary, takes up by the Way, and refuses to go any farther, will never arrive at his Journey's End. We are all Travellers, bound to the heavenly *Jerusalem*, but shall never arrive there, if we grow weary and faint, or are frightened out of our Way, and return back. This Life is a Passage, and the Service of God is the Road we must walk in, which if we constantly observe, we shall infallibly arrive at the happy Place we are bound to, but if we leave this straight and safe Road, and turn to

the right, or left Hand, either thro' Fear in Time of Persecutions or for Favour, and to gain any temporal Advantage, we shall be carried quite out of the Way, and be irrecoverably lost.

To encourage us to this Perseverance God promises the most glorious Recompence. *Be faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.* Apoc. Chap. ii Ver. 10. He proposes eternal Salvation as a Reward for all who continue to serve him with Fidelity, nor can we desire greater Encouragement. To serve God for a few Years, and then to be eternally happy. What can we wish for, or desire more? It is a Reward infinitely exceeding all our Labour or Sufferings, infinitely more than we can lose, and he must be very unreasonable whom this Consideration cannot induce to love and serve God, or persuade to persevere therein to the End of his Life. Christians! can we think it too much to serve God as long as we live, to serve him a few Years, for our Lives are no more, when he has provided and promised so glorious a Recompence? Let us consider this, and remember that without Perseverance all we do will signify nothing. It is not enough to serve God for some Time, some Years only; we must be constant to the End of our Lives, or we shall never obtain the Crown. It would be a sad Misfortune to have served God some Part of our Time, and then to abandon him. In this Case all our former Actions of Piety would be of no Benefit to us. This, well considered, will be of great Service

Service to encourage us to Perseverance in the Service of God, that being faithful unto Death we may receive the promised Crown of Life.

ASPIRATIONS.

O divine Jesus! the Precepts thou didst give to thy Apostles, concern us as well as them. Give me Grace and Power to observe them. If thou leavest me to myself, alas! what am I able to do? Weak and Miserable as I am, I can do nothing without thy Help and Assistance. Help me then, O thou only Strength of my Soul! make me steady and constant in thy Service, nor ever to grow weary of loving and serving thee.

My God, my Sovereign Lord and Master! shall I ever quit thee and leave thy Service? Where shall I go if I abandon thee? Where shall I find a Master so worthy, so good, so generous and so kind as thou art? Can I think to be happy in the Service of a vain deceitful World? To think so, is to deceive myself to my eternal Ruin,

O thou God of my Life, and all that I have! no Service is so sweet and easy as thine! by loving and serving thee, I shall enjoy even a Heaven upon Earth, besides the much greater Happiness thou wilt give me hereafter. Ah, dearest Lord, how good, how bountiful art thou! I wish a thousand Times I had never been ungrateful to thee. O make me more faithful for the future. May I never more be

128 St. JOHN Baptist. June 24.

ungrateful to thee! I now resolve to love and serve thee to the last Moment of my Life, and O may I live and die in this Disposition.

Holy St. *Barnaby*, pray for me. Obtain for me the Grace of Perseverance. May I imitate your Zeal, your Constancy and Fidelity, and share in that endless Glory and Happiness you enjoy.

J U N E 24.

Nativity of St. JOHN Baptist.

THE Nativity of this great Saint was foretold by the Angel *Gabriel* to his Father *Zachary*, as it is recounted by the Evangelist St. *Luke*, in the Gospel read on the Vigil of this Feast; and when the same holy Angel was sent by God to the blessed Virgin to declare to her that she should bring forth the Saviour of the World, he likewise told her that her Cousin *Elizabeth* had conceived in her Old-Age, and was then six Months gone with Child. The Angel being departed, the blessed Virgin went to visit St. *Elizabeth*, and no sooner had saluted her, when the Baptist leaped in his Mother's Womb, and was then sanctified in it, and was filled with the Holy Ghost, according to the Prediction of the Angel. After his Birth, when he was to be circumcised, he
received

received the Name of *John*, and his Father *Zachary* recovered his lost Speech. St. *Luke* says of him, that he grew up, and was strengthened in Spirit, and was in the Desert till the Day of his Manifestation to *Israel*. St. *Luke*, Chap. i. V. 80. It was in the Wilderness that by a secret Commerce with God, by Prayer, Solitude, and the Rigours of an austere and penitential Life, he was prepared for the Exercise of that Function to which he was called. When he entered upon his ministerial Office of Precursor, he preached the Baptism of Repentance to the Jews, exhorting them to do Penance, and warning them of the approaching Kingdom of God, and the coming of their promised *Messias* in the Person of Jesus Christ, whom he declared to be that Lamb of God which took away the Sins of the World. This was the Testimony St. *John* gave to Jesus Christ, and whom he had the Honour to baptise in the River *Jordan*, and to behold the Holy Ghost descend upon him in the Form of a Dove.

The Wonders which happened at his Birth, his great Sanctity, the Innocence and Austerity of his Life, and his fervent Preaching, had raised in the Jews a very high Opinion of St. *John*, and made them send from *Jerusalem* Priests and Levites to know of him whether he was not *Elias*, or a Prophet, or even the *Messias*. To whom the humble Saint replied, He was not. And being asked, Who he was? called himself no more than a Voice in the Desert.

Desart. But tho' the Baptist gave this low Character of himself, our Lord said of him that he was more than a Prophet, and that of those who are born of Women, there was not a greater than he. At length to the Merits of his most innocent and holy Life was added the Glory of Martyrdom; for having with great Zeal and Freedom reproved King *Herod* for his incestuous Cohabitation with *Herodias*, his Brother *Philip's* Wife, he drew upon himself the Resentment of that Prince, who cast him into Prison; but this did not satisfy *Herodias*, whose Malice sought the Life of St. *John*, and only waited for an Opportunity to satisfy her Revenge; and on *Herod's* Birth-day, her Daughter dancing before the King and his Court, obtained of him a Promise confirmed by Oath to give her whatever she asked. This gave the wicked Woman an Occasion to satisfy her cruel Resentments against the Baptist, and unwilling to let it slip, she bid her Daughter demand of *Herod* the Head of St. *John*. The cruel Prince, out of a pretended Scruple not to violate his Oath, sent an Executioner, who beheaded the Saint in Prison. Thus ended his Course the holy Precursor of Jesus Christ, and lost his Life to satisfy the Resentment of *Herod's* incestuous Paramour. And on this Account the Church has enrolled him among the holy Martyrs, and under that Title celebrates the Feast of his Decollation on the 29th of *August*.

St. JOHN Baptist. *June 24.* 131

The Feast of the Nativity of St. *John* Baptist is of early Date in the Church. It is mentioned as one of the principal Solemnities by the Council of *Agd*, in the Year 506, and seems to have been founded on those Words of the Angel *Gabriel*; *Many* shall rejoice in his Nativity. St. *Luke*, Chap. i. Ver. 14. This Reason St. *Bernard* assigns in one of his Epistles, saying, The Church celebrates the Deaths of other Saints, because their Lives and Deaths were holy, but it reveres the Nativity of St. *John* Baptist, because even his Birth was holy, and a Source of holy Joy. *Ep.* 175.

The GOSPEL. St. *Luke*, Chap. i. Ver. 57.

Now *Elizabeth's* full Time of being delivered was come; and she brought forth a Son. 58. And her Neighbours and Kinsfolks heard that the Lord had shewed his great Mercy to her, and they congratulated with her. 59. And it came to pass that on the eighth Day they came to circumcise the Child, and they called him by his Father's Name, *Zachary*. 60. And his Mother answering, said, Not so, but he shall be called *John*. 61. And they said to her, There is none of thy Kindred that is called by this Name. 62. And they made Signs to his Father, how he would have him called. 63. And demanding a Writing-table, he wrote, saying, *John* is his Name. And they all wondered. 64. And immediately his Mouth was opened, and his Tongue loosed,
and

and he spoke, praising God. 65. And fear came upon all their Neighbours; and all these Things were noised abroad over all the Hill-Country of *Judea*. 66. And all they that heard them, laid them up in their Hearts, saying; What an one, think ye, shall this Child be? For the Hand of the Lord was with him. 67. And *Zachary* his Father was filled with the Holy Ghost; and he prophesied, saying. 68. Blessed be the Lord God of *Israel*; because he hath visited, and wrought the Redemption of his People.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

The wonderful Birth of St. *John Baptist*, and the remarkable Circumstances attending it, as related by the holy Evangelist, call this Day for our serious Attention; and if therein we behold what is just Matter of Admiration, we shall also find excellent Lessons for our Instruction. The Scripture gives this Character of his Parents, *that they were just, walking in all the Commandments of the Lord blameless*. St. *Luke*, Ch. i. V. 6 The Baptist was sanctified in his Mother's Womb, and born of one who was old and barren. His Father *Zachary*, not believing the Angel's Words, who foretold his Birth, was struck dumb in Punishment of his Unbelief, but recovered his Speech again at his Circumcision, and praised God for his wonderful Goodness and Mercy: And Fear coming upon all who were present made them cry out

out in Wonder and Astonishment, *What an one think ye shall this Child be?* All these wonderful Incidents are recorded and delivered by the sacred Penman, by the particular Direction of the Holy Ghost, for our Instruction. From the Piety of *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*, walking in the Commandments of the Lord blameless, we may learn, and it sufficiently proves, that the Commandments of God are not impossible to be kept, but that, assisted by Grace, we may, and ought to walk in them blameless, obeying his Precepts, and doing what he requires, especially since the Law of Christ is much easier than the Law of *Moses*. *My Yoke, says Christ, is sweet, and my Burden light.* St. Matt. Chap. xi. V. 30. From the Unbelief and Punishment of *Zachary* we may understand the strict Justice of God, who does not let the Faults of his most faithful Servants pass unpunished. Thus he punished a little Distrust and Emotion in holy *Moses*, by not letting him enter into the Land of Promise. How terrible and severe then will he be in the Punishment of bold and daring Sinners? and how careful ought we to be of deliberately and wilfully offending him by Sin.

If we admire the Piety of the Parents, let us also consider the Sanctity of the Son; and by his Example be stirred up to a zealous Observance of our Duty. His Father *Zachary* being asked how he would have him called, declared his Name was *John*, to the Signification of which he admirably corresponded. In-
Baptism

Baptism we receive a Christian Name, given us as a constant Monitor, to put us in Mind that we ought carefully to imitate the Virtue and Piety of the Saint whose Name we bear, and thereby correspond to the Grace we receive in the holy Sacrament of Baptism. The Baptist was called *John*, which signifies Grace, with which he was sanctified in his Mother's Womb, and by which he lived so holy, so innocent, and yet so penitential and austere a Life. From his Infancy he remained in the Desert, till the Time of his appearing in Public, which was about the 30th Year of his Age. In this Retreat he conserved that Grace which he had received; for this he retired from all Commerce with the World; and that he might not, as the Church sings of him in her Hymn for this Feast, sully his Innocence with the least Spot. In this Retirement he grew in Grace, and was strengthened in Spirit; and when the appointed Time came, by the Order of God he quitted the Desert, and appeared in Public in a penitential Garb, a Garment of Camel-skin girt with a Leathern Girdle. In this Dress he preached to the Jews Penance and the Remission of Sins, without Distinction of Persons, neither flattering the Rich, nor courting the Mighty. He boldly reprov'd King *Herod* for his incestuous Adultery, and finished his Mission and his Life by dying a Martyr for Chastity and Truth. Admirable Example of Sanctity and Perfection! How far short do we come of it! We, who call ourselves Followers
of

of that Jesus, of whom he was the Precursor ! Let us humble ourselves in a Spirit of Penance, and beg Grace to amend, and to live as becomes Christians and Disciples of Christ. We are to remember, that the Spirit of the Gospel we profess to believe is a Spirit of Humility, Mortification, and Self-denial. The Kingdom of God is at hand, and we must prepare for it by holy and penitential Lives, by doing a holy Violence to our corrupt Inclinations. This the Saints did, and this we must do likewise ; for Christ has told us, *the Kingdom of Heaven suffers Violence, and the Violent bear it away.* St. Matt. Chap. xi. Ver. 12.

We may observe further, how it is said in this Gospel, that all who heard those Things which were said of St. John the Baptist, laid them up in their Hearts. Excellent and instructive Remark ! from whence we may learn that when we read or hear the Wonders of God, and the admirable Effects of his Grace, in his holy Servants, we should lay them up in our Hearts by devout Meditation and serious Reflection, and look upon the holy Actions and strict Piety of the Saints not barely as Objects of Admiration, but also as excellent Copies for our Imitation. For to stir us up to an Imitation of their Virtues is one and the chief End of the Institution of their holy Festivals ; and is the best Way of honouring them. And without sincere Endeavours to practise the Virtues they set us an Example of, what Profit can we hope to reap from keeping their Feasts, conse-

136 St. JOHN Baptist. June 24.

consecrating their Memories, or begging their Intercessions? Having therefore the Example of *St. John Baptist* this Day set before us, let us endeavour, by the Grace of God assisting us, to do Penance for our Sins, and amend our Lives, that we may be prepared for that Kingdom which he tells us is at hand; for to call ourselves Christians, and not to live as Christians ought to do, will be of no Advantage to us, it will only serve to increase our Guilt, and make our Punishment more severe.

ASPIRATIONS.

How wonderful art thou, O God, in thy Saints! How mysterious and instructive thy Conduct in their Regard! Thou requirest of us, that we should be holy, because thou art holy. Thou givest us the Example of thy Saints, as so many excellent Patterns to copy after. Give us thy Grace to love and serve thee like them, that while we honour their Memories, may we imitate their Virtues.

Thou hast given Testimony in thy holy Word, that *Zachary* and *Elizabeth* did walk before thee blameless, and yet thou didst punish in him his not readily believing what the Angel said to him. How much Reason then have I to fear and tremble, who have so often, and so grievously offended thee? *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, O Lord, for in thy Sight shall no one living be justified, Psal. cxlii. Shouldst thou*

S. Peter and S. Paul. *June 29.* 137

thou strictly *observe* my *Iniquities*, O Lord, Lord
who shall sustain it? Psal. cxxix

O Jesus, my Saviour and Redcemer ! how
can I pretend to love thee, and wilfully do any
Thing that displeases thee ? O thou desired
Object of all my Wishes ! thou dear Expecta-
tion of all my Hopes ! let me never offend thee
wilfully in the smallest Matter ! rather let me
suffer any Thing, rather let me die, than be
so ungrateful to thy Love !

Holy Precursor of Jesus ! Glorious St. *John
Baptist* ! help me with your Prayers, and ob-
tain for me an ardent Love of God, that I may
love him above all Things, and be happy with
him for ever.

J U N E 29.

S. PETER, and S. PAUL, *Apostles.*

THIS Day is sacred to the Memory of
St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, those two great
Pillars and Founders of the Church. St. *Pe-
ter* was called and appointed by Jesus Christ,
to be, under him, the supreme visible Head of
his Catholic Church. An Honour which the
Bishops of *Rome* enjoy by Vertue of being his
Successors in the Apostolic See. The Church
of *Rome* being, on account of St. *Peter* having
established his Chair there, the Mother and
Mistress

138 *S. Peter and S. Paul. June 29.*

Mistress of all other Churches, and the chief Guardian of divine Truths ; all other Churches being obliged to hold Communion with her, as *St. Jerome* observes, *Ep. lvii.* Hence in the Writings of the antient Fathers, *St. Peter* is called the Prince of the Apostles, and supreme Pastor of the Church, the Head of the Apostolic College, intrusted with Christ's whole Flock. To him Christ gave, in a particular Manner, the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and to him committed the Feeding of his Sheep and Lambs, without Exception. *St. John*, Chap. xxi. Christ declared him to be the Rock on which he would build his Church. *St. Matt.* Ch. xvi. V. 18. and for that Reason changed his Name, which was *Simon*, and called him *Cephas*, or *Petrus*, which signifies a Rock. We may further observe, that in Scripture *St. Peter* is always named before the rest of the Apostles. *St. Matt.* Chap. x. *St. Mark*, Chap. iii. *St. Luke*, Chap. vi. *Acts*, Chap. i. Nor is he named in the first Place, as *Primus inter Pares*, the first in Order only, and among Equals, but the first in Jurisdiction, *Primus super Cæteros*, as the Head and Chief of them. As such, he and his Successors in the See of *Rome* were considered, acknowledged and obeyed in all Ages of the Church.

St. Peter was a Native of *Bethsaida* in *Galilee*, and was first brought to Christ by his Brother *Andrew* ; after which he constantly attended our blessed Lord ; who going into his
House,

S. Peter and S. Paul. June 29. 139

House, cured his Mother-in Law of a Fever. He was present with St. James and St. John, when Jesus Christ raised to Life *Jarius's* Daughter; as also at the Transfiguration of our blessed Saviour on Mount *Tabor*, and during his Agony in the Garden. It appears from many Passages in the holy Gospel, that St. Peter had a strong Faith and ardent Love for his Master, the holy Jesus. One Day seeing Christ walking upon the Water, having obtained Leave, he threw himself out of the Boat in which he was, to walk upon the Waters to meet him. Christ having another Time asked the Apostles what they thought of him, St. Peter immediately replied: *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.* In return of which Confession, our Saviour said to him: *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock will I build my Church.* St. Matt. chap. xvi. Ver. 18. At the last Supper, when Christ offered to wash his Feet, he would not suffer so great a Humiliation, but no sooner had his divine Master told him, that unless he washed his Feet, he could have no Part in him; but he cried out: *Lord, not only my Feet, but also my Hands and my Head.* St. John, ch. xiii. V. 9. And when our Saviour told the Apostles, one of them should betray him, St. Peter, impatient to know which of them it was, probably with an Intention to hinder him, made a Sign to St. John to ask our blessed Lord, and told Jesus Christ, that tho' all the rest of his Disciples should forsake him, he never would, but was ready to die with him. To

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abate this Self-confidence of the Apostle, Christ answered, that he should deny him thrice, This he did, for tho' he shewed so much Courage in the Garden of *Gethsemani*, as to draw his Sword in Defence of his Master, and to cut off the Ear of the High-Priest's Servant, yet he then fled away with the rest of the Apostles, and afterwards with Oaths and Curses denied that he knew Christ; but immediately recovered his Fall, and washed away the Guilt of his Crime by penitential Tears, which flowed from his Eyes ever after as often as he heard a Cock crow, as the antient Historians of his Life relate. After our Saviour's Resurrection, being in his Bark, he saw our Lord on the Shore and went to him thro' the Sea; and the other Disciples coming in the ship to Land, Christ invited them to eat, and demanded of *St. Peter* three Times if he loved him; to whom the Apostle with tender Affection replied, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* *St. John*, Chap. xxi. repairing his triple Denial by a triple Protestation of Love, which was recompensed by the Charge Christ gave to him of all his Flock.

When the Holy Ghost had descended on the Apostles, *St. Peter* preached boldly the Name of Jesus to the Jews, and by his first Sermon converted three thousand Persons. Some Days after that, going to the Temple with *St. John* he cured a lame Man, and by another Discourse gained over to the Faith five thousand Jews. This drew upon the Apostles the Re-
sentment

S. Peter and S. Paul. June 29. 141

sentment of the High-Priest and Elders, by whose Orders they were cast into prison, and being brought before the Council, *St. Peter*, with great Courage and Freedom, maintained Christ to be the *Son of God*. The same he did a second Time, when called before the High-Priest, with the other Apostles, he and they returned from the Council full of Joy for having been scourged and ill-treated for the Sake of Christ. This Zeal and Courage of the Prince of the Apostles was accompanied with many Miracles which he wrought. His very Shadow cured the Sick; his single Word struck *Ananias* and *Saphira* dead, in Punishment of their Lying. At *Lydda* he cured a Man who had been eight Years sick of the Palsy. At *Joppa* he raised to Life the charitable *Dorcas*; and by these two Miracles made great Conversions. Going down to *Samaria*, accompanied by *St. John*, to confirm the new Converts there, he met with *Simon Magus*, who offered him Money to have Power to confer the Holy Ghost, whom he severely reprehended, and exhorted, tho' in vain, to do Penance for his Crime.

St. Peter was the first employed by God in the Conversion of the Gentiles, of whom he consecrated the First-fruits to Jesus Christ, by baptising *Cornelius* and his Family. He founded the Church of *Antioch*, and governed it for some Time, and from thence translated his Chair to *Rome*, and fixed his episcopal Seat there, which thereby became the Mother and
Mistress

Mistress of all Churches. This holy See of *Rome* he governed till he died, and watered that Church with his Blood which he had planted by his apostolic Labours. From *Antioch* he wrote his first Epistle addressed to the Faithful in *Asia Minor*, to confirm them in the Faith which he had preached to them. He confirmed the Gospel which St. *Mark* had written, and allowed it to be read in the Church. Going from *Rome* to *Jerusalem*, he was cast into Prison by *Herod Agrippa*, who designed to put him to death to please the Jews, but an Angel delivered him out of Prison, and frustrated the Designs of the cruel Prince. In the Council of the Apostles at *Jerusalem* St. *Peter* declared how God, by him, had opened the Door of Salvation to the Gentiles, and proposed that they should not be obliged to observe the Law of *Moses*. From *Jerusalem* he went again to *Antioch*, and after some Time returned to *Rome*, to finish his Life by a glorious Martyrdom, God having revealed to him his approaching Death, as he says himself in his second Epistle. At *Rome* he met again with *Simon Magus*, and confounded him. The Magician pretended to fly, and by that to shew his deluded Followers that he was more than Man, and by Art Magic mounted up in the Air; but St. *Peter* praying, he soon fell down, broke both his Legs, and died miserably. This enraged the Emperor *Nero*, who was fond of the Magician, and therefore flung the Apostle into Prison

son with St. *Paul*, who was then likewise at *Rome*, where these two Saints converted many Persons, and, among others, the Guards who kept the Prison. Some Accounts of St. *Peter* tell us, that at the pressing Instances of the Christians, and by the Favour of the Guards, he escaped from Prison, and going out of the City met Jesus Christ entering in by the same Gate, to whom he said, *Lord, whither art thou going?* and upon our Saviour's answering, *To Rome, to be crucified again;* comprehending the Meaning of these Words, immediately returned back to Prison, related the Vision to the Faithful, and prepared himself for Death, which he soon after suffered, on the same Day with St. *Paul*, being crucified with his Head downwards, at his own Request, thinking himself not worthy to suffer in the same Manner as Christ had done.

ST. *Paul* was a learned Jew of the Sect of the Pharisees, and had been brought up at the Feet of *Gamaliel*, the celebrated Jewish Doctor, and he testifies of himself, *Ep. ad Gal. Ch. 1.* that he made, under that Master, a much greater Proficiency than any of his Co-evals, and became zealous in the highest Degree for the Observance of the Law of *Moses*, and all the Traditions of his Forefathers. Hence he could not behold without Concern the great Multitudes of Converts to the Christian Faith made by St. *Peter* and the other Apostles after the Descent of the Holy Ghost,

144 *S. Peter and S. Paul. June 29.*

and resolved to exert and shew his Zeal by joining with the High-Priests and those who endeavoured to stop the growing Progress of the Gospel, and in the Persecution then raised against the Church, he was present at the Martyrdom of *St. Stephen*, and afterwards most furiously persecuted the Faithful, till being miraculously converted, he became as zealous in preaching the Gospel, declared boldly in the Synagogues Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, and confounding the Jews who disputed with him. This so enraged them that they resolved to kill him, but he escaped by Night from *Damascus*, and went to *Jerusalem*, where he found, at first, some Difficulty to be received by the Christians, who imagined he might dissemble, the more effectually to prejudice them, but *St. Barnaby*, either informed by *St. Paul*, or by some other Hand, of his miraculous Conversion, introduced him to *St. Peter* and the other Apostles, to whom his Conversion and Zeal for the Name of Christ being related, they received him with Joy.

St. Paul remained some Days at *Jerusalem*, preaching the Christian Faith to the Jews there, who formed another Conspiracy against his Life, which obliged him to quit that City, and was conducted by some of the Faithful to *Cæsarea*, from whence he went to *Tarsus*, where *St. Barnaby* came to him, and carried him to *Antioch*, and where they both remained a Year; in which City the Believers were first called Christians. The Faithful of *Antioch*
having

having made a Collection for those at *Jerusalem*, sent it by St. *Paul* and St. *Barnaby*, who returned to *Antioch*, and from thence, by express Order of the Holy Ghost, were sent to preach the Gospel in other Places. In pursuance of this Command the two Apostles travelled to *Seleucia*, to the Isle of *Cyprus*, and preached in the Synagogues of *Salamine*; from whence they sailed to *Paphos*, where St. *Paul* struck blind the Magician *Elymus*, and converted the Proconsul *Sergius Paulus*; after which they travelled thro' *Pamphylia* and *Pisidia*; the Resistance which here they met with from the Jews made them abandon them, to carry that Light to the Gentiles which they had refused, and going to *Iconium*, they staid a long Time there. Among the Many Converts which St. *Paul* made during his Stay, the illustrious St. *Thecla*, Virgin and Martyr, was one. A Persecution being raised against the Apostles at *Iconium*, they went to *Lystra*, where St. *Paul* having cured a lame Man, was taken for *Mercury*, and St. *Barnaby* for *Jupiter*. Some Jews coming from *Iconium* and *Pisidia*, stirred up the People against them who stoned St. *Paul* and left him for dead, but recovering, the next Day he went with St. *Barnaby* to *Derbe*, and returning thro' *Lystra*, *Iconium*, *Pisidia* and *Pamphylia*, they confirmed the Faithful as they passed, and ordained Priests in the Churches; and being arrived again at *Antioch*, related to the Church there what great Things God had done by them. After some Time they went

146 *S. Peter and S. Paul. June 29.*

again to *Jerusalem* to consult the Apostles there concerning the Observation of the Jewish Law, and whether the Gentile Converts were obliged to keep it and be circumcised. This Dispute being decided, *S. Paul* and *S. Barnabas* returned to *Antioch*, and soon after separated, to preach the Gospel in different Places. *St. Paul*, accompanied by *Silas*, visited the Churches of *Syria* and *Cilicia*, and then went to *Derbe* and *Lystra* where he circumcised *St. Timothy*, and took him along with him to *Troas*, from whence he passed over to *Macedonia*, and remained some Time at *Philippi*. At this Place he converted a Seller of Purple, called *Lydia*, and dispossessed a Girl of an evil Spirit, for which, at the Instigation of her Master, he and *Silas* were scourged and cast into Prison, but the next Day were set at liberty, having converted the Jailor and all his Family. From *Philippi* he went to *Thessalonica*, and having converted great Numbers, the unbelieving Jews forced him to depart and go to *Berea*, from whence another Persecution sent him to *Athens*, having left *Silas* and *St. Timothy* behind him with Orders to follow him. While *St. Paul* expected them at *Athens*, he disputed with the Jews and Philosophers, and being summoned before the *Areopagus*, by his excellent Discourse there he converted *St. Denys*, the *Areopagite*, a Woman called *Damaris*, and divers others. After some Stay at *Athens*, he went to *Corinth*, from which Place he writ his two Epistles to the *Thessalonians*, and then
went

went by *Ephesus* to *Jerusalem*, where he did not stay long but returned by *Antioch*, *Galatia*, and *Phrygia* to *Ephesus*, and made some Stay there, during which he signalized his Apostleship by many Miracles, great Conversions and severe Persecutions which he suffered from the Jews.

While he was at *Ephesus* he understood that some converted Jews had preached at *Galatia* the Necessity of Circumcision, on which he writ his Epistle to the *Galatians*, to correct that Error. Some Divisions arising in the Church of *Corinth*, he writ his first Epistle to them, which had all wish'd-for Success, by procuring an excellent Change in the *Corinthians* for the better. *Demetrius*, a Silver-smith of *Ephesus*, who saw the Ruin of his Trade in the Downfall of Idolatry, stirred up a grievous Tumult against St. *Paul*, which, tho' appeased by the Town-Clerk, obliged the Apostle to leave the City, and go again to *Macedonia*, where likewise he suffered a great deal during the Time he staid there, but received no small Consolation by the Coming of St. *Titus* from *Corinth*, who acquainted him with the good Effect of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, and of their Amendment, to whom he then writ his second Epistle; and soon after went thither himself, and from thence wrote his Epistle to the *Romans*, being then about to go to *Jerusalem*, and leaving *Corinth*, took his Journey by *Macedonia*, and passing from *Philippi* came to *Troas*, where he staid several

148 *S. Peter and S. Paul. June 29.*

Days, and preaching to the Faithful the Night before his Departure, a young Man named *Euticus*, being asleep, fell from the Window and was killed, whom *St. Paul* immediately restored to Life. Leaving *Treas*, he arrived in a few Days at *Miletum*, where sending for the Priests of the Church of *Ephesus*, and having made them an excellent Exhortation, took his leave of them, and embarked for *Jerusalem*, and as soon as he arrived there, went to visit *St. James*, Bishop of that Church, by whom he was advised to purify himself, with four others who had made a Vow, that thereby he might remove the Opinion the Jews had of him as a declared Enemy to the Law of *Moses*. This Advice the Apostle followed, and went the next Day to the Temple. At the End of seven Days some Jews from *Asia* seeing him there, stirred up the whole City against him, but he was delivered from their Fury by the Tribune *Lysias*, who gave *St. Paul* leave to speak to the Jews, to whom he made an excellent Discourse in his own Justification, by which they were more enraged. The next Day he was brought before the High-Priest and Council, among whom there rose a great Division and Disturbance, which obliged the Tribune to carry *St. Paul* to the Camp, where he was strictly guarded. The Night following Jesus Christ appeared to him, and bid him be of good Courage, telling him that he was to bear Testimony of him at *Rome*, as he had done in *Jerusalem*. Forty Jews having bound them-

themselves by an Oath not to eat or drink till they had killed him, the Apostle was advertised of the Conspiracy by his Sister's Son, and was sent by *Lysias* under a strong Guard to *Cæsarea*, with a Letter to *Felix* the Roman Governor of *Judea*. After some Days the High-Priest and others went and accused him to the Governor as one who stirred up Sedition among the People, and prophaned their Temple. *St. Paul* justified his Innocence to *Felix*, who deferred pronouncing any Sentence till the Tribune *Lysias* came to *Cæsarea*, but sent for the Apostle privately, who appearing before him, and his Wife *Drusilla*, who was a Jew, heard him preach on Justice, Chastity, and the last Judgment, at which the Governor trembled, but not receiving any Money from *St. Paul*, as he expected, for his Deliverance, he kept him confined two Years, and then, his Government being expired, willing to do the Jews a Pleasure, he left the Apostle in Chains.

Portius Festus succeeded *Felix* in the Government of *Judea*, and being at *Jerusalem*, the Jews desired he would send Orders to have *St. Paul* brought thither, having formed a Design to Murder him on the Way. This *Festus* refused, and told them that they might go with him to *Cæsarea* and accuse him there. Accordingly the High-Priest and others repaired to *Cæsarea*, and laid many grievous Crimes to his Charge, but without any Proof, insomuch that the Governor perceiving his In-

150 *S. Peter and S. Paul. June 29.*

nocence, would have set him at Liberty : but desirous in part to gratify the Jews, asked St. *Paul* if he would go up to *Jerusalem*, and there be judged ; this the holy Apostle refused, as knowing the malicious Purposes of the Jews, and appealed to the Emperor to whom *Festus* applied, that as he had appealed to *Cæsar*, to *Cæsar* he should go. Before his Departure from *Cæsarea*, he pleaded his Cause before King *Agrippa*, and his Sister *Berenice*, in the Presence of the Governor, and spoke so strongly and clearly in his own Defence, as they agreed that he might have been set at liberty had he not appealed to *Cæsar*. Soon after he was carried on board a Ship with several other Prisoners, and sailed for *Italy*. During their Voyage a furious Tempest shipwreck'd the Vessel, but St *Paul* and all the People who were in it got safe on Shore in the Island of *Melita*, now called *Malta*. Here the Apostle was well received by *Publius*, the principal Man in the Island, whose Father-in-law being ill of a Fever and Bloody-flux, was cured by St. *Paul*, as were many other sick Persons. After three Months, putting again to Sea he continued his Voyage to *Italy*, and arrived safe at *Rome*, where being permitted to have a Lodging to himself under a particular Guards, he preached the Gospel to all those who came to him, and converted great Numbers to the Faith of Christ. In this State he remained two Years, during which he writ his Epistle to *Philemon*, and sent it by *Onesimus* who was *Philemon's* Slave,
and

S. Peter and S. Paul. June 29. 151

and had ran away from his Master, but being converted by S. Paul, returned back to him, and was by him sent to *Rome* again, there to wait and attend upon the Apostle; who also from *Rome* writ his Epistles to the *Philippians*, to the *Collossians*, and to the *Hebrews*. After two Years being confined he was set at liberty, and went to preach the Gospel in several other Countries, and make St. *Titus* Bishop of *Candia* in *Crete*, as he had made St. *Timothy* Bishop of *Ephesus*. And now the Time drew near when he was to finish his Apostolic Labours, and crown them by a glorious Martyrdom; before which he writ his Epistle to St. *Titus*, and his first Epistle to St. *Timothy*, giving them therein many excellent Instructions for the right Discharge of the episcopal Function. At his Return for the last Time to *Rome*, he converted an Officer and a Concubine of the Emperor *Nero*, which drew upon him the Rage of the cruel Tyrant, by whose Orders he was seized, and brought before that Prince loaded with Chains, who remanded him back to Prison, where expecting soon to end his Days, he writ his second Epistle to St. *Timothy*, and one to the *Ephesians*. After St. *Paul* had laid nine Months in Prison, Sentence of Death was pronounced against him, and he was beheaded in Quality of a *Roman* Citizen, and from his Neck Milk gushed out in Abundance, the Moment his blessed Head was severed from his Body. Thus on the 29th of *June* the Prince of the Apostles, and the Doc-

152 S. Peter and S. Paul. June 29.

tor of the Gentiles finished their Course, nor could Death separate those whom the joint Labours and Functions of the Apostleship had, in their Life-time so closely united. Their illustrious Martyrdom happened in the 67th Year of Christ, and the 13th of the Emperor Nero.

The GOSPEL. St. Matt. chap. xvi. ver. 13.

And Jesus came into the Parts of *Cæsarea Philippi*: and he asked his Disciples, saying, Whom do Men say that the Son of Man is? 14. And they replied, Some, *John* the Baptist. and other some *Elias*, and others *Jeremias*, or one of the Prophets. 15 Jesus saith to them, But whom do you say that I am? 16. *Simon Peter* answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. 17. And Jesus answering said to him, Blessed art thou *Simon Bar-jona*: because Flesh and Blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in Heaven. 18. And I say unto thee, That thou art *Peter*, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. 19. And I will give to thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon Earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven.

R E F L E C T I N O S.

Christ in this Gospel, asked his Disciples What Men said of him. This Question he did not put, as if he was ignorant of what they said, and of the different Opinions they had of him; but to try the Apostles, and to give them an Occasion to profess their Faith in him. They had been with him some Time, they had seen his wonderful Miracles, and he had chosen them to be in a particular Manner his Apostles, designed to preach his Gospel in all Parts of the Earth, and therefore he put the Question and required them to declare what they themselves thought him to be. In Answer to this Question, St. Peter, for himself, and in the Name of the rest, made this glorious and sincere Confession: *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God*: that is, thou art Christ, or the anointed, the promised *Messias* whom we and our Fathers have so long expected: thou art the Son of the living God, not by Grace and Adoption, in which Sense all good Christians are, but by Nature and from all Eternity, the true and only-begotten Son of the living God, of God the Father, and one and the same God with him. This is the Opinion we have of thee. This is the Faith we profess in thee. In return of this Confession of St. Peter, Christ told him, he was blessed, or happy. Happy in having that Knowledge revealed to him, not by Flesh and Blood, but by

154 S. Peter and S. Paul. June 29.

by God. For Faith is a Gift of God. *Ephes.* chap. ii ver. 8. and in Reward of St. *Peter's* Faith, our Saviour promised to build his Church upon him, against which the Gates of Hell should never prevail. Christ is indeed the great Foundation and chief Corner Stone ; but all the Apostles are also Foundation-Stones, and are called such in Scripture. *Apoc.* chap. xxi. St. *Peter* is here in an especial Manner distinguished above the rest : to him our blessed Saviour gives the supreme spiritual Power, and makes him Head of the Church. In Consequence of which, we must adhere to St. *Peter* in the Persons of his Successors, and be thereby in Communion with, and Members of the Catholic Church of Christ. It is one of the Marks or Notes of the true Catholic Church, that it is *One*, by all her Members being united under one Head as the Center of Unity, and all professing one and the same Faith. By this we are, as St. *Paul* exhorts us, *Ephes.* chap. iv. ver. 3. *to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.* And the same Apostle reckons Schism and Heresy among those Works of the Flesh which exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven. *Gal.* chap. v. Hence we may learn how great a Happiness it is to be a Member of this Catholic Church, and in Communion with the Successors of St. *Peter* ; for which we ought to give God Thanks, and be careful to live as becomes those who belong to Christ's Sheepfold, and not dishonour our
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found and orthodox Faith by wicked and unholy Lives.

Christians, by assuming to ourselves this sacred Character, and professing ourselves Members of the Catholic Church, we make this Confession of St. *Peter*, and outwardly declare that we believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of the living God. This we often say with our Lips, but do we say it sincerely and from our Hearts? This is the great and important Point, and chiefly to be attended to. Let us seriously consider therefore whether our Actions shew a practical Belief of this Truth, which is not only to believe Christ to be the Son of God, God himself, true God, and true Man, but to live like those who profess him so to be. If we are truly persuaded and do really believe that Christ is our Lord and our God, it necessarily follows, that we must obey him as such, and keep his holy Commandments. It is not a nominal or verbal Confession only that we must make, we must testify the same by our Actions. To call ourselves Christians, to confess him with our Lips, and to live like Heathens, or rather worse, to give ourselves up to the Practice of those Crimes a moral Heathen would be ashamed of, is to deny him by our Works; and we would do well to consider that Christ himself has positively said, *Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the Will of my Father who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven,* St. Matt. Chap.

156 *S. Peter and S. Paul. June 29.*

Chap. vii. Ver. 21. Consequently to this the Apostle assures us, that *Faith without Works is dead*. St. Jac. Chap. iv. Ver. 20. Serious Truths, never to be too often considered ! Is it not for Want of due Attention to this, that so many Christians live so contrary to their holy Profession ? What Judgment can be formed of those who live in a continual daily Practice of Sin, who openly and wilfully violate the positive Commands of Christ, whom they acknowledge to be the Son of the living God ? What other Judgment can be formed of such, but that they are surprisngly foolish, or most daringly wicked and impious ? O that Sinners would duly consider this ! It would strike them with a wholesome and holy Fear, that Fear of the Lord which is the Beginning of true Wisdom, and enable them to see the Rashness and Folly they commit in giving no other Marks or Proofs of believing in Jesus Christ, than barely saying that they do.

St. *Peter* and the other Apostles confessed Christ to be the Son of God ; they confessed it boldly on all Occasions with their Lips, and more so by their holy Lives, by an ardent Zeal for the Glory of God, the Salvation of their own, and their Neighbours Souls. And while we honour and revere their Memory, and keep their Festivals, we ought to imitate their Examples. In St. *Peter* we may behold a strong Faith, great Humility, and Penance. In St. *Paul*, an unlimited, compassionate and disinterested Charity to his Neighbour. From
both,

both, we may learn an unwearied Patience, and an undaunted Courage in the Profession of Christ's Faith and Maxims, with a lively Confidence in the Mercy of our Redeemer, who made Choice of one who denied him, and of the other who persecuted him, to be the main Pillars and Supporters of his Church. And as Jesus Christ in Recompence of St. *Peter's* confessing him to be the Son of the living God, promised to give him the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, he has likewise promised the same Kingdom of Heaven to all those sincere Christians who do truly confess him with their Lips and by their holy, exemplary, and regular Lives. A Kingdom, the Happiness and Glory of which will be an abundant overflowing Reward for all the Care and Pains we can here take to obtain it. If we consider the Saints in that Glory and Happiness they now enjoy, are not our Hearts moved with Desire to possess the same, and to share in their Bliss? If we do sincerely desire this, we must not be unwilling to walk the same Path they have trod before us, and which, as it did them, will bring us, one Day, to the same blessed Place. Our Saviour styled St. *Peter* happy in having it revealed to him that he, Christ, was the Son of the living God. It is a Happiness for us that we are brought to the Knowledge of the true Christian Catholic Faith, that solid Foundation of our Hope, if accompanied with a good Life, of a future and eternal Bliss. Comfortable Reflection, which will sweeten all the Trouble,

158 S. Peter and S. Paul. June 29.

Trouble, and support us under all the Difficulties we may meet with in a Life of practical Piety. What greater Encouragement to love and serve God here, for a few Years, than to think, and to be assured, the Consequence will be to enjoy him for ever hereafter in that glorious Kingdom here mentioned? If Honours and Dignities, Riches and Pleasures here are so apt to take our Hearts and win our Affections, shall not an eternal Crown, the never-fading Riches and Pleasures of Heaven move us? Ah Christians! Let us so run as we may obtain this great, this glorious Prize!

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus, my dear and adorable Saviour! I confess thee to be Christ the Son of the living God. Thou art the true and only Son of God the Father, equal to him in all Things, one and the same God, of the same Nature and Essence, co-equal, co-eternal. God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, by whom all Things were made. Who for us Men, and for our Salvation didst come down from Heaven, and wast conceived by the Holy Ghost in the Womb of the Virgin *Mary*, and wast made Man, and didst suffer under *Pontius Pilate*, and wast crucified, dead and buried: didst rise again from the Dead the third Day, and ascend into Heaven where thou sittest at the Right-Hand of God the Father, from
thence

thence thou wilt come to judge the Living and the Dead, and of thy Kingdom there shall be no End. This, O Jesus! is my Belief, this my Faith in thee.

This Faith, O my God! which I profess with my Mouth, let me also manifest in my Life, and by all my Actions. May I daily confess thee, not only by my Lips, but by an exemplary and holy Life. Ah my God! my Lord! what will it profit me to believe, and confess thee with my Tongue, or approach near thee with my Lips, if my Heart is far from thee? Shall I acknowledge thee, O Christ! to be the Son of God, my Saviour and Redeemer, and not love and obey thee? Shall I call myself one of thy Disciples and Followers, and yet dare to offend thee by Sin? Far be this from me, O thou true Life, and only Happiness of my Soul! let me never be guilty of so great a Folly, so black an Ingratitude to thee! No, no, my dearest Lord! I will own thee, I will confess thee, and I will love, honour and obey thee to the last Moment of my Life.

Glorious Prince of the Apostles! holy Doctor of the Gentiles, pray for me, and obtain for me Grace that I may thus confess Jesus Christ: that I may love him my God above all Things, and rather chuse to die than to deny, or offend him.

JUNE 30.

Commemoration of *S. Paul*, Apostle.

THE Feast of *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, as it is of antient Date in the Church, was always kept with great Solemnity, especially at *Rome*, where the Pope used to celebrate the Office, and sing Mass twice on this Day. Once in the Church of *St. Peter*, and, after that, in the Church of *St. Paul*. But the Distance between the Churches, and the Solemnity of the Office necessarily causing a great Fatigue, it was judged convenient and more proper, as Cardinal *Baronius* observes in his Notes upon the Martyrology, to celebrate the Office of these two Apostles in the Church of *St. Peter*, on the 29th of *June*, and the Day after to celebrate the Commemoration of *St. Paul* in the Church dedicated to him. This Regulation gave Beginning to the Solemnity of this Day, which is therefore called the Commemoration of *St. Paul*.

As the Gospel for this Feast is the same with that of *St. Barnaby*, *June 11*. it may be read, and the moral Reflections thereon may be the Subject of our spiritual Entertainment this Day, or we may make the great Virtues of *St. Paul* the Subject of our pious Thoughts. His great Love of God, and ardent Zeal for his Glory; his unlimited Charity for his Neighbour,

VISITATION of the B. V. Mary. July 2. 161
hour, with his innumerable Labours undergone, and Persecutions suffered for that End. How great his Charity was for his Neighbour, he himself expresses, *Ep. ad Rom.* chap. ix. when he even wishes himself to become *Anathema* from Christ for his Brethren; that is the Jews whom he calls his Kinsmen according to the Flesh. This was truly a great and heroic Charity, the very Summit or Height of Love, O, that we would in some Degree endeavour to imitate it !

JULY .2.

Visitation of the B. V. MARY.

ON this Day the Church commemorates the Visit which the blessed Virgin paid to her Cousin Saint *Elizabeth*; from whence it is called the Visitation of our Lady, and was instituted by Pope *Urban VI.* about the Year 1389. The Angel *Gabriel* having informed the Virgin *Mary*, that her Cousin *Elizabeth* had conceived in her old Age, she immediately went to pay her a Visit, and as soon as ever she had saluted her, the Infant in the Womb of St. *Elizabeth* leaped for Joy, and she thus returned the Virgin's Salutation; *Blessed art thou among Women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy Womb.* And then added, *Whence is this, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?* St. *Luke*, chap. i. Ver. 42. The blessed Virgin,

gin, no less filled with Joy and Admiration, expressed her Gratitude and Humility in that divine Canticle, the *Magnificat*, saying, *My Soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.* And having staid about three Months with Saint *Elizabeth*, returned to her own House.

The GOSPEL. S. Luke, chap. i. Ver. 39.

And *Mary* rising up in those Days, went into the Hill Country with Haste into the City of *Juda*. 40. And she entered into the House of *Zachary*, and saluted *Elizabeth*. 41. And it came to pass, that when *Elizabeth* heard the Salutation of *Mary*, the Infant leaped in her Womb, and *Elizabeth* was filled with the Holy Ghost. 42. And she cried out with a loud Voice, and said, Blessed art thou among Women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy Womb. 43. And whence is this? that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? 44. For behold, as soon as the Voice of thy Salutation sounded in mine Ears, the Infant in my Womb leaped for Joy. 45. And blessed art thou who hast believed, because those Things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord. 46. And *Mary* said, My Soul doth magnify the Lord. 47. And my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

Saint *Paul*, in his second Epistle to Saint *Timothy*, chap. iii. ver. 16. says, that *all Scripture inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in Justice.* Every Part of the sacred Oracles, every particular Circumstance therein related, is full of most excellent Morality, and gives us useful Lessons of Instruction. And such we shall find the Visit of the blessed Virgin to Saint *Elizabeth*, as related in this Gospel, if we consider it seriously, and ponder all the Circumstances of it. It is the Property of true Charity to be communicative; and holy Souls mutually rejoice in the Happiness of each other. Such was the Visit, such the Meeting of *Mary* and *Elizabeth*. It was not a Visit of idle Ceremony, or empty Compliment. Their Entertainment was not of News, Fashions, the Affairs of their Neighbours, or other idle and vain Amusements; but of the Mercies of God, and of the Favours he had conferred upon them. The blessed Virgin visited her Cousin *Elizabeth* in a Spirit of Charity, and cordial good Will. Being informed she was with Child, she went to see her, and to assist her; and for that Reason staid with her three Months, that as she stiled herself Handmaid or Servant, she might perform the Part of one, and pay a just Deference to the Age and Seniority of St. *Elizabeth*, giving thereby Proofs of that Humility

mility which made her so acceptable to God, and raised her to that high Dignity which was conferred upon her by him, who resists the Proud, and gives Grace to the Humble. The same admirable Virtues appear, and are equally instructive in the Conduct of the devout Saint *Elizabeth*, who being filled with the Holy Ghost, saluted the Virgin *Mary*, and called her the Mother of her Lord, and joined with her in praising God for his Mercy and Goodness in fulfilling his Promise to Holy *Abraham*. The Child in her Womb, St. *John Baptist*, leaped for Joy, sensible of the Presence of *Jesus Christ* in the Womb of his Virgin Mother, and of whom he was to be the Precursor, verifying then, what he afterwards said of himself; *The Friend of the Bridegroom that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth much, because of the Bridegroom's Voice. This my Joy therefore is fulfilled.* St. *John*, Chap. iii. Admirable and instructive Visit of holy *Mary* to St. *Elizabeth*! Christians! When shall our Visits to one another be like this, and formed upon this excellent and perfect Plan? At least, let us learn from hence how to regulate our Visits and Entertainments with our Friends and Relations, that they may be sanctified by a right Intention, and be made from Principles of Duty, from Charity to our Neighbours, Christian Friendship, Gratitude and Respect, where it is justly expected from us; that they be not rendered criminal by Vanity, Detraction, or speaking ill of our Neighbours, or speaking of them
with

with a Design to hurt or injure their Reputation, to raise our own upon the Ruin of theirs. In all our Visits and Conversations with our Friends and Acquaintance, particularly to avoid all prophane and immodest Discourse, the Pest and Bane of Christian Society, and the Ruin of many. The Visit of Christians ought, at least, to be perfectly innocent, and neither offend God, nor injure their Neighbour, or hurt their own Souls. Thus carefully regulated, our Visits may be, in some Measure, like this of the blessed Virgin to St. *Elizabeth*, and tend to the Glory of God, and our mutual Benefit.

Another important Lesson we may learn from this Day's Gospel, is an Acknowledgment and Gratitude to God for the Blessings he bestows upon us. We may behold in the Behaviour of the blessed Virgin *Mary* a lively Sense of Favours received, in the warmest Expressions of Gratitude and Duty. With what Devotion she praises God for the Mercies she had received from him! Sensible of the Obligations she had to him, she neither denies nor diminishes them. She breaks forth into that Admirable Canticle, the *Magnificat*, and therein renders to God her humble and sincere Acknowledgements, and reserves nothing to herself but the humble Sentiments of her own Nothing. From hence we may learn, that true Humility does not require that we should either dissemble or deny the natural or supernatural Gifts or Graces which we may have received from God. As they are his Gifts bestowed upon us by him
for

for his Glory, our own and our Neighbour's Good, we are to confess and acknowledge them as such, to proceed from his meer Bounty and Liberality to us, not from ourselves, or as obtained by ourselves, and to him return the sole Praise and Glory for them. For since we have nothing which we have not received, we must not glory as if we did not receive it from him from whom alone every good and perfect Gift comes. Let us therefore, on all Occasions, acknowledge and be grateful for his Blessings and Mercies, both spiritual and temporal; and say with the blessed Virgin; *My Soul doth magnify the Lord.* And with the Royal Psalmist, *I will sing the Mercies of the Lord for ever.* Psal. lxxxviii. Gratitude for Benefit received is a Duty incumbent upon every one, and to be deficient in this Duty renders us altogether unworthy of the Favours we have received. How many and signal Mercies has God bountifully bestowed upon us? How many Blessings, spiritual and temporal, has he, and does he daily confer upon us? And does not our Obligations of Gratitude rise in Proportion to those Mercies? certainly they do. Nor indeed can we ever make him a sufficient Return; but yet must do the best we can, and with grateful Hearts bless and praise him for the same. And the best Manner in which we can praise him, and be most acceptable to him, is from the Consideration of his Mercies to us, to draw Motives to love and serve him with Zeal and Fervour; to love him who has loved us, and let the Proof
of

of our Love be shewn in serious Endeavours to please him in all Things. This will procure us a Continuance of his Favours, and is the only Way to be happy both here and hereafter.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, Honour, and Glory to thee, O Christ! Who being in the Womb of thy Virgin Mother, wast known by thy Precursor St. *John*, who leaped for Joy at thy sacred Presence. Vouchsafe, dearest Jesus, to visit my poor Soul, and make her glad and rejoice in thee. My God! Thou art truly present with me, wherever I am, at all Times, and in all Places. Thou seest and beholdest me whatever I am doing. O may I always walk before thee with a pure and humble Heart.

Sanctify our Visits, O Jesus! Be thou present at, and always be the End of them. May we carry thee with us wherever we go, and receive thee in our Houses. Be thou the Subject of our Entertainments, and the Object of our Praises. May Humility teach us to render our Devoirs where they are due, and Charity cause us to offer our Service where it may be necessary. Let all our Civilities be grounded upon Christian Motives, and may we be always ready to prevent others in Deference and Respect.

O thou eternal Source of all Blessings, with all possible Sincerity and Gratitude I desire to

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praise

168 St. MARY MAGDALEN. July 22.

praise and bless thee for all thy Mercies to me, and in a deep Sense of my Obligations to thee, daily to say ; *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me praise his holy Name,* Psal. cii.

O holy Mother of God ! Incomparable Virgin ! Whose holy Soul did so devoutly magnify the Lord ; pray for me, and obtain for me that I may so love and serve God here, as to praise and glorify him for ever in Heaven.

J U L Y 22.

St. MARY MAGDALEN.

THIS illustrious Penitent and Saint, Sister to St. *Martha* and *Lazarus*, whom Christ raised from the Dead, was born in *Judea*, of Parents considerable and rich, by whose Death becoming Mistress of an ample Fortune, she unhappily abandoned herself to the gay and unlawful Pleasures of Life without Restraint. But He, whose powerful Grace, oftentimes of the greatest Sinners makes the greatest Saints, touched her Heart, and wrought an intire Conversion in her ; and that Love which had been prostituted to the Vanities and forbidden Pleasures of this World, she bestowed intirely upon him who had cured her of the Evils she had so long lain under, and had cast out of her seven Devils.

St. MARY MAGDALEN. July 22. 169

Devils. After her Conversion she loved much, and much was forgiven her. Her kissing the Feet of our Saviour, and washing them with Tears of Love and Sorrow, and wiping them with her Hair, obtained for her that comfortable Sentence, *Thy Sins are forgiven thee, go in Peace.* St. Luke, ch. vii. Ver. 48, 50. This Conversion of St. Mary Magdalen was followed by a constant adhering to our blessed Lord, and administering to the Necessities of him and his Disciples, in a grateful Acknowledgment of the Favours she had received. In Return to this, the holy Jesus was pleased to favour her with a particular Affection, and the Evangelist tells us, that Jesus loved *Martha and her Sister Mary and Lazarus.* St. John, chap. xi. ver. 5. who often had the Honour and Happiness of receiving him as a Guest at their House, where, while *Martha* was busy in preparing her Entertainment, St. Mary Magdalen, sitting at Christ's Feet, feasted her Soul with hearing his divine Words: And, upon her Sister's complaining that she left her alone to serve, our Saviour declared she had chosen the better Part, which should not be taken from her, St. Luke, chap. x. ver. 42. He justified her also another Time from the Murmuring of some of his own Disciples, when, being at Supper she poured a Box of very precious Ointment of Spikenard on his Head, and anointing his Feet, wiped them with her Hair. Her Love was generous and strong; she valued not the Gift, but the Person she bestowed it upon, nor

170 St. MARY MAGDALEN. *July 22.*

thought much to give her dear Lord this Testimony of her tender Affection. Some of the Disciples, particularly *Judas*, thought it a great Waste in this holy Woman, and sought to justify their Censures by a Pretence of Charity to the Poor; but Jesus Christ approved St. *Mary Magdalen's* Devotion, and defended what she had done, with a Promise that in all after Ages, and in all Places where the Gospel should be preached, it should be spoke in Memory of her. At the Crucifixion of our Saviour, St. *Mary Magdalen* and some other devout Women were present, and having seen him taken down from the Cross and assisted at his Burial, she went away; but the Day after the Sabbath returned to his Sepulchre very early in the Morning, carrying with her sweet Perfumes to anoint his sacred Body: Being come there, she found the great Stone rolled away from the Door of the Monument; but not finding his Body, run back, and told St. *Peter* and St. *John*, that somebody had taken away her Lord. The two Apostles ran in Haste to the Sepulchre, and not finding our Saviour's Body, but only the Linen Cloths it had been wrapped in, returned to *Jerusalem*. The devout *Magdalen* remained by the Monument, and as she was weeping, and looking in, she saw two Angels in white, who said to her, *Woman, why weepest thou?* To whom she replied; *Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.* St. *John*, chap. xx. And turning about, she beheld

St. MARY MAGDALEN. *July 22. 171*

held a Man, who also asked her what she sought there, and why she wept. She, taking him to be the Gardener of the Place, and not knowing it was Jesus, said to him, *Sir, if you have taken him from hence, tell me where you have laid him, and I will carry him away.* Then Jesus discovering himself, called her by her Name. Transported with Joy, she cried out, *Rabboni, Myfter,* and fell at his Feet to adore him. Our Saviour forbade her to touch him, and sent her to declare his Resurrection to the Apostles. She obeyed the Order and declared to them that Christ was risen, whom she had seen before them, in Recompence of her having searched after him with greater Love and Perseverance.

From Church History and Tradition we learn, that in the Persecution which was raised against the Church after the Martyrdom of St. Stephen, when the Christians were dispersed, and none but the Apostles staid at *Jerusalem*, the Jews seized upon St. *Mary Magdalen*, her Sister *Martha* and Brother *Lazarus*, *Marcella*, her Servant, and St. *Maximinus*, one of the seventy-two Disciples, and some other Christians, and forced them on Board a Vessel, without Sails or Oars, and committed them to the wide Sea, as to a sure and certain Shipwreck: But the Providence of God, whose Power commands the Winds and the Waves, directed the Ship to *Marfeilles*, where these holy Confessors of Christ arrived safe on shore. This Miracle astonished the Inhabitants of that

172 *St. MARY MAGDALEN. July 22.*

Place, and disposed them to hearken to the Preaching of *St. Lazarus* and *St. Maximinus*, by whose Exhortations they were converted to the Faith of Christ. Here *St. Mary Magdalen* enjoyed without Interruption that better Part she had chosen, retiring to a large Cave of an exceeding high Mountain wherein she lived thirty Years separated from all Company and Conversation, daily wrapped in Contemplation, and carried up by Angels to hear the Music of Heaven, till by a happy Death her Soul was joined to that glorious Company of Angels and Saints, with them to enjoy her beloved Lord, and sing his Praises for ever. The Cave she dwelt in, and her Sepulchre are yet to be seen, as is also her Scull exposed to the pious Veneration of the Faithful.

The GOSPEL. St. Luke, chap. vii. ver. 36.

And a certain Pharisee desired him to eat with him. And he went into the House of the Pharisee, and sat down to Meat. 37. And behold a Woman that was in the City a Sinner, when she knew that he sat at Meat in the Pharisee's House, brought an Alabaſter Box of Ointment. 38. And ſtanding behind at his Feet, ſhe began to waſh his Feet with Tears, and wiped them with the Hairs of her Head, and kiſſed his Feet, and anointed them with the Ointment, 39. And the Pharisee who had invited him, ſeeing it, ſpoke within himſelf, ſaying; This Man, if he were a Prophet, would

St. MARY MAGDALEN. July 22. 173

would know surely who and what Manner of Woman this is that touched him, that she is a Sinner. 40. And Jesus answering, said to him, *Simon*, I have something to say to thee; but he replied, Master, say it. 41. A certain Creditor had two Debtors, the one owed him five hundred Pence, and the other fifty. 42. And whereas they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both; Which therefore of the two loved him most? 43. *Simon* answering, said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said to him; thou hast judged rightly. 44. And turning to the Woman, he said unto *Simon*, seekest thou this Woman? I entered into thy House, thou gavest me no Water for my Feet; but she with Tears hath washed my Feet, and with her Hairs hath wiped them. 45. Thou gavest me no Kiss, but since I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my Feet. 46. My Head with Oil thou didst not anoint; but she with Ointment hath anointed my Feet. 47. Wherefore I say to thee, many Sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less. 48. And he said to her, thy Sins are forgiven thee. 49. And they who sat at Meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth Sins also? And he said to the Woman, Thy Faith hath made thee safe, go in Peace.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

From what we read in this holy Gospel of the wonderful Conversion of *St. Mary Magdalen*, from a great Sinner to be a greater Saint, we may draw several useful and profitable Instructions, particularly with regard to Repentance and a true Conversion. In the Case of this holy Penitent, we may behold and admire the Power of divine Grace, and how ready and willing God is to receive all penitent Sinners to Mercy and Pardon. Our Sins will be no Hindrance to the divine Favours, if, like *St. Mary Magdalen*, we endeavour to wash them away with penitential Tears, and Waters of true Contrition and Sorrow.

The Fervour and Sincerity of her Repentance is proposed by the Church in this Gospel as a Model which all Sinners ought to follow, who desire to return to God by a sincere Conversion, and to obtain Pardon of their Sins. In order to this, let us seriously consider every Circumstance of her happy Conversion, every Part of which is truly instructive. In the first Place we may observe, that she sought after Jesus Christ, not as many other Jews did, for the Health of her Body, and to be cured of corporal Sicknefs; but for the Health of her Soul, and to obtain Pardon of her Sins. Illuminated by divine Grace, she became sensible of the sad Condition her Soul was in, and she sought

ST. MARY MAGDALEN. *July 22.* 175

sought after her spiritual Physician. This she did immediately as soon as ever she knew where he was, without letting any human Considerations, or what the World would say, stop or hinder her. She was neither afraid nor ashamed of the Company with whom he was at Table. She made no Difficulty to acknowledge her Sins in public, and seemed willing to have Witness of what she did; that by public Repentance she might repair the public Scandal she had given by her past Life. Excellent Instructions for Sinners, teaching them, that as soon as ever God touches their Hearts, by his Grace, and calls them to Repentance, they must instantly obey the divine Call, and not defer their Conversion; lest, slighting his Grace, and not embracing the favourable Opportunity offered, they come unhappily to die in their Sins. When a Sinner defers and puts off his Repentance and Conversion, it is a Sign he is not much troubled at them, and is too indifferent about being freed from them. If worldly Motives, and Human Considerations, such as a Fear of what the World will say, make the Sinner unwilling to repent and to change his Life, it is plain that he loves his Sins, and chuses to remain in a sick and dangerous State, rather than to be cured and to be restored to spiritual Health.

Another instructive Circumstance of *St. Mary Magdalen's* Repentance and Conversion, is the Humility which appears in her Conduct. She placed herself behind Jesus Christ, as not

176 St. MARY MAGDALEN. July 22.

presuming to appear before his Face. She kissed his Feet, watered them with her Tears, and wiped them with her Hair. Sinners truly converted, and desirous to be received into the Favour of God, must, like her, kiss the Feet of Jesus, by Acts of true Contrition and Works of Penance. St. *Mary Magdalen* washed the Feet of Jesus with her Tears, which shewed her Humility and the Greatness of her Grief more than Words could do. The most efficacious Prayer of a penitent Sinner is that of Tears. St. *Peter*, after his Fall, said nothing, but went forth, and wept bitterly. St. *Mary Magdalen* said not one Word, but shed Tears abundantly. She was sensible of her Sins, and knew whom she had offended. Her penitent Soul was in Trouble, and her Grief forced a Passage through her Eyes, which was soon turned into Joy, by the comfortable Assurance Christ gave her, that her Sins were forgiven. She wiped the Feet of Jesus with her Hair, and thereby shewed, not only her Humility, but also the Sincerity of her Conversion, making that the Instrument of Penance, which before had served her Vanity. Humility may be stiled the Soul of true Penance, and an humble and contrite Heart is the principal Victim which a penitent Sinner ought to offer to Almighty God. A Sinner truly converted will follow the Advice of St. *Paul*. *As you made your Members serve to Uncleanneſs and to Iniquity upon Iniquity, ſo now make your Members ſerve Juſtice unto Sanctification.* Ep. ad Rom. Chap. vi.
Happy

Happy Effect of a true Conversion, when a Sinner reconciled to God, shews himself more careful and zealous to love and serve God, more earnest to please him, than he was bold and daring to offend him; whose Heart cleansed and purified by Grace, and the Sacrament of Penance, is filled with the Love of God, governing and directing all his Actions to a right End, and who may say with St. Paul; *When Sin abounded, Grace did more abound.* Rom. chap. v. ver. 20 Of this holy *Magdalen* is an admirable Example and instructive Proof. Many Sins were forgiven her, because she loved much. This Truth it self-said of her, nor is it to be doubted but that her Love was greater after she had heard, *Thy Sins are forgiven thee.* The Favour she had received filled her Heart with Love, and Sentiments of Gratitude and Acknowledgment. Excellent Model for our Imitation! We have great Reason to love God infinitely good in himself, and infinitely merciful to us. We have great Reason to be sorry for offending him, and to love him, who so easily pardons our Sins upon our Repentance. He is a truly kind and indulgent Father, and regards us as his beloved Children. A Child who loves his Parent, and is therefore sorry that he has offended him, easily obtains Pardon. If we love God, and because we love him, are sorry that we displease him, that Love will easily procure us a Reconciliation, and the Forgiveness of our Sins from him who has declared that he delights to shew Mercy

178 St. MARY MAGDALEN. July 22.

cy to the Sons of Men. Christians ! Is not this a very great Encouragement to return to God, to seek him by sincere Repentance, and to find him in a true Conversion ? Let us imitate the penitent *Magdalen*. Let us grieve and be sorry for our Sins, and let the Love of God be the Source of our Sorrow and Contrition. If like her we love much, much will be forgiven, and much will be given to us, greater Degrees of Grace, by which we shall be enabled to love him more and more. *To him that has*, says Jesus Christ, *St. Luke*, chap viii. *more shall be given*. That is, to him who makes a good Use of what he has received. Thus the great Saint of this Day loved much, and received much, in the Pardon of her Sins : She made a good Use of what she had received, and more was given to her, in the particular Affection Christ was pleased to have for her, and the extraordinary Favours he conferred upon her.

ASPIRATIONS.

O Jesus, my only Saviour ! thou true and only Physician of Souls, and Remedy of all our Evils ! I prostrate myself at thy adorable Feet, and desire to wash them with my penitential Tears. Alas ! my God, can I reflect upon the Number and Greatness of my Sins, and not weep and mourn ? O dear Redeemer, give me a holy Sorrow for my Sins. Let my
Heart

SA. MARY MAGDALEN. *July 22.* 179

Heart be pierced with Grief, that I may bewail my Folly and my Ingratitude to thee.

O my Soul! where can we find a more proper Subject for Tears and Sorrow than our Sins? Let us grieve then and mourn, and let our Grief be the Token of a sincere Conversion. Let us be no more Servants of Sin; let us sacrifice every Thing that has been to us an Occasion of sinning, and endeavour to make them Instruments of Penance, and to punish our former Follies and Extravagances. Let us turn away our Eyes, that they may be no longer delighted in Vanity. Let our Feet no longer walk in the Way of Sinners, nor our Hearts be set upon the forbidden Pleasures of this World. Let all our Senses, all our Members be now consecrated to God, and be employed in the Service and Love of him.

O Jesus! Inexhaustible Fountain of divine Love! Fill my Heart with an ardent Love of thee. May I never desire any Thing but to love thee. O that my Heart might be so filled with thy Love, that every Motion of it may tend towards thee. Give me, dear Lord, that strong and courageous Love, which may resist and be victorious over all that shall oppose it, that with Pleasure I may sacrifice to thy Love all that is charming or agreeable in this World.

O holy *Magdalen*! Thou who didst love much, and hadst much forgiven thee, pray for me. O holy Penitent, obtain for me a true
and

and sincere Sorrow for my Sins, that I may obtain Pardon for them, tho' they are very many and very great; and that I may fervently love and faithfully serve my God to the End of my Life.

J U L Y 25.

Saint JAMES, Apostle.

THIS Apostle was a Native of *Bethsaida*. He was Son of *Zebedee*, and Brother of *St. John* the Evangelist. His Profession was that of a Fisherman, from which he was called, with his Brother, by Jesus Christ, to follow him, and was chosen to be one of the Twelve. He was present, with *St. Peter* and *St. John*, at the Transfiguration of our blessed Lord on Mount *Thabor*, as also at the raising to Life *Jairus's* Daughter, and at the Agony of Jesus in the Garden of *Gethsemani*. Saint *James* had a great and ardent Zeal for his divine Master, and shew'd it, with his Brother *St. John*, in a remarkable Manner, when the *Samaritans* refused our blessed Lord Entertainment in their City, he desired Permission of Christ to pray that Fire from Heaven might fall upon and consume them in Punishment of their Rudeness and Inhospitality. This fiery Zeal our Saviour repressed, telling them, they knew
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not what Spirit they were of. Probably on this Account it was that Christ stiled them *Boanarges*, or Sons of Thunder. The Apostles, when they were first called, and followed Jesus Christ, seemed to have had no other Notion than that, according to the Expectation of the *Jews*, he would restore their fallen Monarchy, and establish a glorious temporal Kingdom, in which St. *James* and St. *John* had a Mind to be distinguished by some peculiar Mark of Honour above the rest of their Fellow Disciples ; but not chusing, or perhaps ashamed, to demand it themselves, they prevailed on their Mother to ask of Jesus Christ that they might have the two first Places in his Kingdom, and sit, one at his right, and the other at his left Hand. Our blessed Saviour reprehended their Ambition, by telling them they knew not what they asked, and demanded of them if they could drink of the Cup of his Passion, they replied, they were able and willing. Christ assured them they should drink of his Cup ; and St. *James* was the first of the Apostles who tasted of it, being the first of them who suffered Martyrdom, and lost his Life for the Faith of Christ.

After the Ascension of our blessed Lord, St. *James* preached the Gospel with great Success in *Judea* and *Samaria*, from whence he went into *Spain*, and converted great Numbers to the Christian Faith. Having staid some Time there, he returned to *Jerusalem* to drink of that Cup he had told our blessed Saviour he was able
and

and willing to do. *Herod Agrippa*, who was Grandson to *Herod the Great*, being raised to the Throne of *Judea*, by *Claudius*, the Roman Emperor, to ingratiate himself with the *Jews*, ordered the holy Apostle to be seized, and condemned him to be beheaded. As he was conducted to the Place designed for his Martyrdom, the Person who had accused him, surprised at the Courage and Patience the holy Martyr shewed, was converted, and publicly declared himself to be a Christian, and was immediately condemned to suffer with him, whose Pardon he humbly begged for having accused him. St. *James* with Joy embraced the happy Convert, and gave him the Kiss of Peace, saying, *Peace be with thee*. After which they were both beheaded. The Body of the Apostle in after Ages was carried into *Spain*, and honourably deposited in the Town of *Compostella*, which was erected into an Archbishoprick by Pope *Calixtus the Second*, in Honour of St. *James*, whose sacred Remains are held in the greatest Veneration, and Multitudes of devout Pilgrims resort from all Parts to pay their Devotions at his sacred Shrine. This 25th of *July*, on which the Church celebrates his Memory, is the Day whereon his holy Body was translated to *Compostella*; for his Martyrdom was a few Days before *Easter*, in the 44th Year of *Jesus Christ*, and the 4th of the Emperor *Claudius*.

The GOSPEL. St. Matt. chap. xx. ver. 20.

Then came to him the Mother of the Sons of *Zebedee*, with her Sons, adoring and asking something of him. 21. Who said to her, what wilt thou? She saith to him; say that these my two Sons may sit, the one on thy right Hand, and the other on thy left in thy Kingdom. 22. And *Jesus* answering, said, You know not what you ask. Can you drink of the Chalice that I shall drink? They said to him, We can. 23. He saith to them; My Chalice indeed you shall drink; but to sit on my right or left Hand, is not mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by my Father.

REFLECTIONS.

Pride and Ambition are dangerous Passions, and very formidable Enemies of our Souls, no less subtle than strong. They endeavour artfully to steal upon us, and having once seized upon our Hearts, keep us strongly bound in Servitude to them. The Consequences of their prevailing over us are so very pernicious, as should make us extremely careful and circumspect how we give way to them; and we may observe, from this Gospel, how they laid hold of the Apostles themselves. St. *James* and St. *John* were ambitious of having the first Places in the Kingdom of Christ, and interposed their
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Mother's Petition, as a Cloak to hide their own inordinate Desires. They would not publicly own their Pretensions, but sought to obtain their Ends by her speaking for them, who came to Jesus, and having adored him, made known her Sons Desires. Thus Pride endeavours oftentimes to make its Way by Humility, and is contented to stoop low, that it may rise higher. The Desire of the two Apostles was no ways pleasing to our blessed Saviour, who humbled them by a severe Reprimand, and gave them to understand, that if they desired to become great in his Kingdom, they must be qualified for it by Humility, and that he who would be the first among them, should be as the Seavant of all, and for this he proposed his own Example, who came into the World not to be served, but to serve. If we desire to shew ourselves true Disciples of the holy and humble Jesus, it must be by true and sincere Humility, being content to serve him in a low and humble Station, not ambitiously seeking to be preferred before others ; or to let Pride make us uneasy and discontented with the Condition of Life wherein the Will of God has placed us. Pride, and a Desire of the first Place, cast *Lucifer* out of Heaven, and flung him into the Bottom of Hell ; and from one of the brightest and most glorious Angels, transformed into a Devil. Pride and Ambition have ruined and lost Thousands of Souls. O ! how much safer, and more secure is it to follow
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low the Advice of Christ, to sit in the lowest Place ! If we do this, he will say to us, *Friend, sit up higher.* St. Luke, chap. xiv. For he assures us, *He who humbles himself shall be exalted.* St. Matt. chap. xxiii. ver. 12.

You know not what you ask, was the Reply Christ made to the Request of St. James and St. John. The same Answer may be truly said to Worldlings, and those who so eagerly seek after and demand Honour and Grandeur. They ask and seek they know not what. To a worldly Spirit it may appear charming and desirable to be preferred before others, and to be exalted to Honour and Dignities. But, alas ! such labour under a great Mistake. It is to cheat themselves with a Bubble, and to catch at a Shadow, instead of the Substance ; and, under an Appearance of Happiness, to cover a great deal of real Trouble and Misery. If we were sufficiently sensible of the Vanity and Danger of Worldly Grandeur and Honour, we should not be so very fond of, nor foolishly ask or seek them. They are not only too often Obstacles and Hindrances to our eternal Happiness, and put us upon doing what is inconsistent with our Profession, as Disciples and Followers of Jesus Christ, but are, in themselves, unable to make us happy and content ; for they are, at best, transitory and uncertain, and after a great deal of Trouble and Fatigue to procure them, suddenly leave us, and we find ourselves stript of our imaginary Felicity. This is a Truth confirmed by a thousand Examples,

amples, which stand upon the Records of History sacred and prophane. From hence we may learn to moderate our Desires, and not seek or wish for we know not what. If we desire to be great and honourable, let us seek to be so in the Sight of God, and in his Service. The highest Honour is to be one of his Servants. This indeed is a laudable Ambition, and worthy of a Christian; and as such, to be content to be low, and of no Esteem in this World; but labour to be great and glorious in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Answer of Christ to the Apostle's Demand is also an excellent Instruction to many Christians who are often discontented with that Station wherein Providence has placed them; and this not out of Pride and Ambition, but from a wrong Notion that they should do better, and be able to do more Good if they were in this or that State. To such it may be said, *You know not what you ask.* We often fancy, we could do great Things, if we were in another State of Life. But this in general is a very great Mistake, and while we are thinking of what we could, and fancy we should do in this or that Station, neglect and forget what we may and ought to do in the Way of Life God has called us to; as he knows best what is fittest for us, and has appointed various Stations and Conditions of Life, so he calls every one to that State which may best answer the Designs of his Providence over them; and all we have to do, and what we ought to do, is
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to be content with our Condition, and endeavour faithfully to discharge the respective and particular Duties of that State we are in. If we are called to the Exercises of an active and laborious Life, we are not to neglect them under a Pretence of giving up ourselves to Prayer and Contemplation. In all Things we must follow the Order of God, and love and serve him in that Way he assigns us, and who has not annexed Sanctity and Perfection to one only State of Life. To imagine then we can't serve him as we ought, in our present Station, or that we could do great Matters if we were in another, or a higher, is asking we know not what; is an Illusion, a dangerous Mistake, and often a Temptation of the Enemy, against which our best Defence is to be content with the Lot Providence has assigned us, mindful of what the Apostle St. Paul says; *Let every Man abide in the same Calling in which he is called.* 1 Cor. chap. vii. ver. 20. The various and different Stations of Men in the World, is the Consequence of that admirable and wise Disposition by which the better Government and Good of the Whole is provided for. To murmur therefore, or be discontented with our own Condition, and inordinately to wish to be in this or that Station, is seeking to disturb, and invert the Order of Providence in our Regard, and to censure his infinite Wisdom who knows best what is fittest for every one, and orders all Things for the best, and for the greater Good of every one. These Reflections
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may let us see that it is our Duty, as Christians, to be content with our Station, and therein to love and serve God with Fidelity and Constancy. Every Christian who does this, however poor and low he may be in this World, will, thereby, come to be great and glorious in the Kingdom of Heaven.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O *Jesus*, my dear and adorable Master ! thou who art the Reward and most perfect Example of Humility ; let not Pride and Ambition cause me to deviate from my Profession of being thy Disciple and Follower. Alas ! my God, what have I to be proud of, or what should make me desire to be preferred before others ? Have I any Reason to ambiate Honours or high Station, unworthy as I am of the least Favour ? Let it suffice me to be numbered among the least of thy Servants. If thou wilt mercifully afford me the least Place in thy Kingdom, it is more than I deserve, and I shall be happy. To be a Servant of thine, O my God ! is a greater Honour than to command the World. This I beg, and hope from thy free Bounty and Liberality, and for this I will endeavour to qualify myself by Humility. I pretend to no Merit of my own. All I have, I received from thee, and whatever I hope for, I expect from thy Goodness. Preserve me, sweet *Jesus*,

fus, in this humble Disposition, that I may be owned by thee for one of thy Disciples.

My God ! I am, and will be content with whatever State or Condition thy Providence shall place me in. Take from me all inordinate Desires and Wishes for what it may not be thy good Pleasure I should have. May all my Desires and Wishes center in thy holy Will. Not as I will, O Lord, but as thou wilt. Thy Will be done. I am contented to live in a low and mean Station, to be poor, unknown and unregarded, if it is thy holy Will, and whatever State I am in, I will consecrate that, and my whole self entirely to thy Love and Service.

O holy St. *James*, who didst drink of the Cup of your divine Master, and didst lay down your Life for his Sake ; pray for me that I may imitate your Courage and Constancy, and be content to suffer Difficulties and Hardships in in this World, and be happy with you in the Kingdom of God.

J U L Y 26.

St. ANN, Mother of the B. V. Mary.

THE greatest Elogium we can give to St. *Ann*, is to acknowledge her, with the Church, Mother of the blessed Virgin, and Grandmother of Jesus Christ. For the rest we have nothing certain and indubitable in ecclesiastical History of the very early Ages. According to St. *John Damascen*, she had lived several Years with her Husband St. *Joachim*, without having any Children, and the blessed Virgin *Mary* was born of St. *Ann*, when she was advanced in Years. The near Relation she bore to our blessed Saviour according to the Flesh, is sufficient to justify the Veneration the Catholic Church pays to her, who on the same Account has placed St. *Joachim* in the Calendar, and keeps his Feast on the 20th of *March*. *Du Pin* informs us, that the Feast of St. *Ann* began to be observed in the *Greek Church* about the sixth Age; but in the *Latin Church* not till after the twelfth. This Feast is a Holiday of Obligation in *England*, chiefly, I believe, from Custom, which by Length of Time has acquired the Force of a Law; or perhaps in Consequence of a Bull of Pope *Urban VIII.* in the Year 1642, wherein his Holiness declares, that many Archbishops, and Bishops of several Kingdoms having represented the

the great Inconveniences arising from so great a Number of Holidays, he grants a Diminution of them, and then names what Festivals should be observed as Holidays of Obligation, and among them places the Feast of St. *Ann*.

The GOSPEL. St. Matt. chap. xiii. ver. 44.

• The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Treasure hidden in a Field. Which a Man having found, hid it, and for Joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that Field. 45. Again the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Merchant, seeking good Pearls. 46. Who when he had found one precious Pearl, went his Way, and sold all that he had, and bought it. 47. Again the Kingdom of Heaven is like to a Net cast into the Sea and gathering together all Kind of Fish. 48. Which, when it was filled, they drew out, and sitting by the Shore, they chose the good into Vessels, but the bad they cast forth. 49. So shall it be at the End of the World. The Angels shall go forth, and shall separate the Wicked from among the Just. 50. And shall cast them into the Furnace of Fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. 51. Have you understood all these Things? They say unto him, Yes. 52. He said unto them, Therefore every Scribe instructed in the Kingdom of Heaven, is like to a Man that is a Householder, who bringeth forth out of his Treasure new Things and old.

R E E L E C T I O N S.

Nothing can more deserve the serious Attention of Christians than the admirable and instructive Comparisons of the Kingdom of Heaven which our blessed Saviour makes in this holy Gospel. Under these Comparisons, how fully, and in the strongest and most lively Manner are the Interest and Duty of Christians laid before them ! A Kingdom, not one of this World, but an everlasting Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven and all the boundless and immense Treasures of it, to be found, and to be purchased ! A truly goodly precious Pearl, which sought after will be found and may be bought, and which obtained will make us eternally happy ! This certainly is our best and greatest Interest, and it is our Duty to search after, and to endeavour to obtain this Kingdom of Heaven, it being the true and only End for which we are made. In order to this we must seek after this precious Pearl ; we must endeavour to find this hidden Treasure, and which in vain we seek after among the sinful and forbidden Pleasures of this World. It is to be found only by those serious Christians, who, contemning this World and its sinful Vanities, seek for better and richer Pearls than are to be met with in temporal Honours, Riches and Pleasures. To such, by the Light of Grace, is discovered this valuable and rich Treasure, this truly precious Pearl, and such find it in
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the Love and Service of God. If we sincerely desire to find it, we must thus seek after it, and when found, to purchase it, part with all we have. This valuable Pearl, this hidden Treasure, is to be bought, but will not be sold for some one, or more Things; all we have must be given for it, and it richly deserves all we have, for we shall be infinite Gainers by the Purchase. This, Christ himself assures us, when having said, *Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my Disciple.* St. Luke, chap. xiv. ver. 33. He says further, that, *Whoever loseth any Thing for my Sake, shall receive a hundred Fold in this World, and in the World to come, Life everlasting.* St. Matt. chap. xix. ver. 29. Excellent Encouragement to part with the Things of this World, and not set our Hearts and Affections upon them. We must then be very foolish Merchants not to be willing to make so glorious, so profitable a Purchase. Ah! rather let us thank God for having discovered to us this rich Treasure, and make no Delay in securing it to ourselves.

Our blessed Saviour having thus compared the Kingdom of Heaven to a hidden Treasure, and a goodly Pearl of great Price, adds another significant Comparison, which must be duly attended to, that we may not fall into Mistakes, and deceive ourselves. He compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a Net flung into the Sea, which draws all Sorts of Fish, some good and some bad. These, when the Fisher-

men come to Shore they cast away, but put the good into Vessels. The Kingdom of Heaven in this Comparison signifies the Church, in whose universal Net are contained good and bad Christians, like good and bad Fish drawn into one Net. There are many who seem desirous to purchase the heavenly Treasure, the goodly precious Pearl, and would believe they are sure of it, by an outward Profession of the Christian Faith, and professing themselves Members of the Catholic Church, but will in the End find themselves sadly mistaken. There are many, alas! who by Baptism, and by profession of the true Faith, are in the Net, or Pale of the Church, but by their wicked Lives and Actions contradict all the Principles of that holy Faith they profess, and are a Scandal to their holy Religion. Such are here represented by the bad Fish in the Net, good for nothing. Others there are, and may their Numbers daily increase! who live up to their Profession, and, making the holy Gospel the Rule of their Conduct, adorn their holy Faith by an exemplary and pious Life. These truly seek, and will find and obtain the precious Pearl of eternal Happiness. These are the good Fish which when drawn to Shore are put into Vessels for Use, while the bad are cast away. This, as our blessed Lord himself declares, is a Representation of what shall be the End of the Wicked, and the Good; the different Exit they make, and of their different Condition in the other World. At the last Day when
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Christ shall come to judge every one according to his Works, then shall the Wicked, as bad stinking Fish, be cast away, and be thrown into the bottomless Gulph of Fire and Brimstone, where, howling and gnashing their Teeth, they shall remain eternal Victims of God's just Wrath and Indignation, and for ever suffer the Punishment due to their Crimes. But the Just and Righteous shall be called to the Possession of everlasting Bliss in the Kingdom of God and his Saints, there to dwell and be happy for all Eternity.

Jesus Christ having spoke to his Apostles in these Comparisons, asked them if they understood these Things; and they replied, Yes. Let us put the same Question to ourselves, Christians. Do we understand what our Saviour here says? Do we practically comprehend his Meaning? that is, do we so understand as to act consequently thereto? A mere understanding the literal Meaning is not enough; this alone will be of little Service to us. The Apostles by their Answer to Jesus Christ, that they understood what he had said to them, signified that they were willing to act conformable to the Precepts and Councils he gave them. We must do the same, and being thus informed by Truth itself what will be the Condition of the Just and the Wicked, it is no less our Interest than our Duty to take care and comply with what he commands. If we sincerely desire to have a Share in the Happiness of the Just, we must live like them, and let all our

Actions be directed by the Gospel Rule, without which it will signify little barely to understand what Christ says or to have a speculative Knowledge of the Truths of Religion, for if we know our Duty, and observe it not, that Knowledge will serve but to render us more criminal, and subject us to a severe Punishment. *He who knows his Master's Will and does it not, shall be beaten with many Stripes.* St. Luke, chap. xii. ver. 47. says Jesus Christ. This will let us see how sadly we deceive ourselves, if we imagine that any Thing less than a punctual Observance of our Duty will secure our eternal Salvation. If we have had the Misfortune hitherto to have lived otherwise, we must in Time sincerely repent and amend, for there is no other Way to save our Souls, and to be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven.

ASPIRATIONS.

O my God! I acknowledge this great and serious Truth. Give me thy Grace that I may live and act consequently to it. Ah Lord, what will it avail me to understand thy admirable Doctrine, if I do not make it the Rule of my Conduct? Deliver me, O God, from so great a Folly, and as I know thy holy Will, let it be my constant daily Care to observe it.

O Jesus, how adorable is thy Wisdom and Goodness! how kind and endearing are the Ways of thy Love! Thou mercifully condescendest

descendest to our Weakness, and dost familiarly instruct us in our Duty by thy admirable and significant Parables. Under the Similitude of a hidden Treasure and a precious Pearl thou givest us to understand the infinite Value of the Kingdom of Heaven, which is truly worth all we can give or part with to obtain it.

O my God ! I desire to purchase this hidden Treasure, this precious Pearl ; and am content to quit and abandon this World, and all I can possess in it, to purchase thy Love, and the glorious Rewards thou hast laid up for those who fear thee. Heaven shall be the only Object of my Wishes. Thither all my Desires shall bend, and all my Endeavours be to gain a Portion in that happy Kingdom.

O holy St. *Ann*, help me by your Prayers, and intercede for me that I may thus diligently seek, and happily find this valuable Treasure ; that I may constantly love and serve my God here, and enjoy him hereafter.

(198)

AUGUST 6.

Transfiguration of our Blessed LORD.

THIS Solemnity is of a more ancient Date in the Eastern than in the *Latin* Church, for we find it mentioned in the Monology of the *Greeks*, and in the Constitution of the Emperor *Michael Comnenus*. *Platina* attributes the Institution of it in the Western Church to Pope *Calixtus* III. with a proper Office, and the same Indulgences as are granted on the Feast of the holy Sacrament. *Pius* V. changed the Hymns at Vespers and Lauds, with the Lessons of the first and second Nocturn, and ordered those which are now used. The learned Cardinal *Baronius* carries the Institution of this Festival several Ages higher than the Time of *Calixtus* III. for the Bull of *Raynaldus*, on which *Platina* grounds his Opinion, Father *Thomasin* says, only extended the Celebration of this Feast, and made it more universal. It is noted in the Martyrology of *Wandelbert*, who lived in the Year 850; and there are yet extant Sermons of St. *Leo*, St. *Cyril* of *Alexandria*, St. *Ephrem*, and other Fathers, at least attributed to them, upon this Festival which prove the Observation of it to have been very ancient. In the Statutes of St. *Peter*, Abbot of *Cluny*, it is ordered to be celebrated with the same Solemnity as the Feast of the Purifi-

Purification, and it is there observed, that the ancient, and the then Custom of several Churches was to keep it with the same solemn Pomp as the Festivals of the Epiphany and the Ascension.

See *P. Thomassin's*, Treatise of the Feasts,
Lib. 2. C. 19. and *Gavant Comment.*
in Rub. Sect. 7. C. 10. &c.

The GOSPEL. St. Matt. chap. xvii. ver. 1.

And six Days after, Jesus taketh unto him *Peter*, and *James*, and *John* his Brother, and bringeth them up to a high Mountain apart. 2. And he was transfigured before them: and his Face did shine as the Sun; and his Garments became white as Snow. 3. And behold there appeared to them *Moses* and *Elias* talking with him. 4. And *Peter* answering said to Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three Tabernacles; one for thee, one for *Moses*, and one for *Elias*. 5. While he was yet speaking, lo, a bright Cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a Voice out of the Cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. 6. And the Disciples hearing it, fell on their Faces, and were very much afraid. 7. And Jesus came, and touched them, and said to them, Arise, and fear not. 8. And they lifting up their Eyes, saw no one but only Jesus. 9. And as they came down from the Mount Jesus charged
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them, saying, tell the Vision to no Man, till the Son of Man be risen from the Dead.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

This glorious Transfiguration of our blessed Lord on Mount *Thabor*, where he shewed himself to St. *Peter*, St. *James*, and St. *John*, in so much Splendor and Majesty, was designed by him not only to confirm their Faith and Belief in him as the Son of God, and true promised *Messias*, but also to encourage them as his Disciples, by letting them see a short Glimpse of the transcendant Glory and Brightness of that Kingdom of Heaven he had often mentioned to them. They had frequently been told by Jesus Christ of the Sufferings they were to undergo, of carrying their Cross, of being persecuted and hated by all Men for his Sake; that they might not therefore be disheartened, he told them of the glorious Recompence they should receive when they were admitted into his Kingdom. Now, as what our blessed Lord said to his Disciples concerned not only them but all those who should hereafter believe in him, all Christians are equally interested therein, and this Solemnity of our blessed Lord's Transfiguration, as related in this Gospel, will afford excellent and most useful Instructions relative to every one.

We may therefore first consider Jesus Christ appearing to his Disciples with his Face shining and glorious as the Sun, and his Garments white

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white as the Snow; and at the same Time appeared *Moses* and *Elias*, talking with him. This wonderful Appearance struck the Apostles with an extasy of Admiration; and St. *Peter* was so delighted, that he desired to remain there. All other Thoughts, all other Hopes and Desires were swallowed up in the pleasing Glories of this Vision. *Lord*, said he, *It is good for us to be here.* He desired no more, and was unwilling to quit that Place, where Jesus appeared in such Splendor and Brightness. No Wonder the Prince of the Apostles lost himself in the Deliciousness of this Spectacle, and desired there to fix his Abode without returning from the Mount. To him who knows how to value God as he ought, and sees, by the Eye of Faith, the ineffable Glories of his heavenly Kingdom, the World becomes truly contemptible, and not worth looking after: and if the Glory with which Jesus appeared on Mount *Thabor* was so great, and yet, but as a small Spark of what is to be enjoyed in Heaven, what shall we meet with when admitted to that delightful Place, where we shall see God Face to Face, and when his Beauties shall have no Veil to hide them from our Eyes? But who shall ascend up to this holy Mountain? None but those of whom the royal Psalmist speaks, *Pf. xxiii.* who have innocent Hands, and clean Hearts, who have not received their Souls in vain, that is, to bury and lose them among the false and fading Pleasures of a wicked World. If we desire to behold Jesus, and possess him in
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all his Glory in Heaven, we must here in some measure be transformed into him by living according to his Spirit, by hearing and following his Doctrine and holy Example. This is clearly intimated by that Voice from the Cloud; *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.* We must hear him, not only by outwardly confessing him to be the Son of God, our Saviour and Redeemer, but also and chiefly by the Obedience we pay to his Commands.

A second Thing to be considered in our blessed Lord's Transfiguration is, that St. Peter and the two other Apostles hearing the Voice from this bright Cloud, were struck with great Fear, tho' it was a Voice of Comfort and Consolation, and by which the eternal Father bore witness to his eternal Son, bidding the Apostles hear him. But if this struck the Disciples with Dread and Apprehension, what will the Voice of God be, when his Wrath shall speak in Thunder, about to take Vengeance of wicked and impenitent Sinners? O! what Horror and Confusion, what Trembling and Amazement will it then cause to such! How will those bold and daring Wretches tremble, who now refuse to hearken to the Voice of God, in Mercy calling them to hear his beloved Son Jesus Christ, and to obey him, how will they then be overwhelmed with Terror at hearing his awful Voice condemning them to everlasting Fire, there to burn without ever being consumed, and to remain eternal Victims of his Justice
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for having despised and abused his Mercy. Let us seriously consider this, and often to make it the Subject of our Thoughts and Reflection will be of great Advantage to us, and fill us with a wholesome Fear, and put us upon taking a proper Care to use the necessary Means to avoid the Judgments, and to share in the Mercy of God.

We may further observe in this Transfiguration of the holy Jesus, that the Discourse which *Moses* and *Elias* had with him was concerning his Passion and Sufferings, which he was to undergo, and to signify to the Apostles, and to all who would be his true Disciples, that if they desire to partake of his Glory, they must share likewise in his Sufferings. After his Resurrection from the Dead, he told the two Disciples, going to *Emmaus*, that it behoved him to suffer, and so to enter into Glory. To reign with Christ we must suffer with him. If we aspire after the Glory of Heaven, here represented on Mount *Thabor*, we must be content, by Sufferings, to accompany Jesus Christ, and wait upon him to Mount *Calvary*. And for our Encouragement we may consider that all the Sufferings of this Life are but little in Comparison of the Glory which shall be revealed to us in the next. Admirable Encouragement, Christians, to bear with Patience the Crosses, Afflictions, and Misfortunes we meet with in this World, which may be considered as so many Steps by which we mount up and
ascend

ascend this glorious and desirable Mountain. If we did but seriously reflect upon this, how different would our Conduct be! Instead of murmuring, repining, and complaining under temporal Sufferings and Crosses, we should look upon them as Blessings, and truly say from our Hearts, as we are taught daily to say with our Lips, *Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.* These are the moral and instructive Lessons read to us in this Day's holy Solemnity. Let us hearken to, and put them in Practice, and then we shall be one Day transfigured, that is translated from the Troubles and Miseries of this World to the Glory and Happiness of Heaven, represented to us by this transfiguration of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus, my dear Redeemer! transform and change me unto thee. If I have hitherto carried the Image of the earthly *Adam*, may it be changed into that of thee the second *Adam*, and Parent of Life. O let me ascend up this sacred Mountain by Purity of Life, and dwell with thee by holy Contemplation and Love. Let me build a little Tabernacle for thee, O Lord, in my Heart, where thou mayest delight to dwell, and where thou mayest for ever reside.

O my adorable Redeemer! I earnestly desire to partake with thee in thy Glory, and I am content to share with thee in thy Sufferings. I desire to ascend with thee on Mount *Thabor*, but will also follow thee to Mount *Calvary*. There may I die to myself and all the World, there will I offer up myself a Sacrifice to thee on the Altar of thy Cross. Love of me nailed thee, dear Lord, to that sacred Wood, and Love of thee shall fix me on it likewise. May I there remain united to thee by Love, till thou shalt please to call me to the full and happy Enjoyment of thee in Heaven. The Thoughts of this shall sweeten all the Bitterness of my Sufferings here, and which, as thou hast promised, thou wilt abundantly recompense hereafter.

AUGUST 10.

St. LAURENCE. Martyr

THIS illustrious Martyr was a Deacon of the *Roman* Church under the Pontificate of Pope *Sixtus II.* who raised him to that Rank on account of his eminent Fervour and great Piety, committing to him also the Dispensation of the Churches Treasure for the Relief of the Poor. In this, then esteemed, eminent Station, *St. Laurence* behaved with that Prudence, Integrity and Zeal, as sufficiently shewed how capable and qualified he was for this ecclesiastical Function. The Emperor *Valerian* having published a severe Edict against the Christians in the Year 258, by which the Bishops, Priests and Deacons of the Church were particularly sought after to be put to death without Delay, the sacred and holy Pope *Sixtus* was apprehended, and as they led him to Execution, *St. Laurence* followed, weeping bitterly, not for the Loss of his Bishop, but because he himself was not carried to Martyrdom with him. His ardent Desire of suffering for the Christian Faith shewed itself in that moving and pathetic Address he made to the Pope. “O holy Bishop, said he, whither are you going without your Deacon? you never was accustomed to offer up Sacrifice without me, your Minister. “Wherein

“ Wherein have I displeased your Paternity ?
 “ have you observed any Thing in me unwor-
 “ thy of that sacred Ministry to which you have
 “ raised me ? Try me now whether you have
 “ chosen a proper Minister to whom you did
 “ commit the Dispensation of the Chalice of
 “ the Lord’s Blood.” This Zeal and Fervour
 was highly pleasing to St. *Sixtus* ; who replied
 to this excellent Deacon : “ I do not leave
 “ thee, my Son, nor abandon thee. We, old
 “ and infirm, are about to finish our Course
 “ by an easier Combat ; but greater and se-
 “ verer Trials remain for thee. You, as
 “ young and strong, after a sharper Conflict,
 “ shall obtain a more glorious Triumph over
 “ the Tyrant : within three Days you shall
 “ follow me. In the mean time, what Trea-
 “ sures you have in your Keeping distribute
 “ among the Poor.” This Answer filled St.
Laurence with great Joy, and the Pope being
 beheaded on the 6th of *August*, his holy Dea-
 con immediately distributed the Treasure, as
 he had been ordered. The Emperor being
 informed of Treasures in St. *Laurence’s* Keeping,
 commanded him to be seized, and being brought
 into his Presence, required those Treasures to be
 delivered up. The Martyr desired some Time
 to bring them, which being granted, he soon
 appeared again before *Valerian*, accompanied
 by a great Number of poor People, and with
 an undaunted Courage told the Tyrant, They
 were the Treasures of which he had the Care.
 It is impossible to express the Fury of the Em-
 peror

peror was in at this Answer. He ordered the Saint immediately to be most cruelly scourged, and all the different Instruments of Torture to be brought in order to frighten him, and shake his Constancy, whom he commanded to renounce his Faith and deny the Son of God ; but in vain. The heroic Soldier of Jesus Christ, far from being intimidated, expressed greater Firmness and Resolution, on which he was ordered to Prison till the cruel Ingenuity of *Valerian* could find some most exquisite Torments to inflict upon him. While *St. Laurence* was in Prison, *Romanus*, a Soldier, was so touched with his invincible Courage and Patience, that he instantly declared himself a Christian, and went to the Prison, and getting some Water was there baptized by the holy Martyr. His Conversion was made known to the Emperor, who instantly commanded him to be beheaded, and he received the Crown of Martyrdom the Day before his holy Master and Father in Christ, and is mentioned in the Martyrology on the 9th of this Month ; as are on the 13th, *St. Hyppolitus*, *St. Concordia*, his Nurse, and all his Family. *St. Hyppolitus* was likewise converted by *St. Laurence*, while in Prison, and brought *St. Concordia* and his whole Family to the Knowledge of Jesus Christ, for whom they generously laid down their Lives. *St. Hyppolitus* was drawn to Pieces by wild Horses. *St. Concordia* was scourged to Death, and the rest of the Family were beheaded three Days after *St. Laurence* had

had finished his Course by a most cruel Death ; for the Tyrant now enraged at these Conversions, and above measure vexed at his not getting the Treasures, ordered St. *Laurence* again to be brought before him ; the holy Deacon behaved with the same unshaken Constancy and Resolution, and which was not in the least diminished by the Sufferings he had undergone. *Valerian* endeavoured first by Flatteries and fine Promises, then by severe Threats to make him deny Christ and sacrifice to Idols ; but to no Purpose ; the Saint was inflexible, and condemned alike the Promises and Threats of the Emperor, who in a Rage ordered him to be a second Time Cruelly scourged, and then to be laid on a red-hot Gridiron, with a slow Fire under it, that his Body broiling by Degrees, the Torment might be longer ; all which served but to render his Martyrdom more glorious, who undisturbed and with admirable Patience supported the burning and broiling of his Flesh, for the Joy he was in to suffer for Christ made him, as it were, insensible of Pain ; the Fire of divine Love which burned in his Breast being stronger than that which consumed his Body. Hence, when one Side of him was quite roasted, he generously insulted over the Barbarity of his Persecutor, and addressing himself to the Tyrant, said, “ This Side is now roasted enough, turn over and eat ; for the Church’s Treasures which you require, I have sent to Heaven by the Hands of the Poor.” Thus triumphing over the Enemies

210 *St. LAURENCE. August 10.*

Enemies of his Faith he compleated his illustrious Martyrdom, and expired on the Grid-iron the 10th Day of *August*, in the Year 258. His Body was afterwards honourably interred by the Christians, and his Memory is deservedly celebrated by the Catholic Church in all Places.

The GOSPEL. St. John, chap. xii. ver. 24.

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the Grain of Wheat falling into the Ground, die, itself remaineth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much Fruit. 25. He that loveth his Life shall lose it: and he that hateth his Life in this World, keepeth it unto Life eternal. 26 If any Man minister to me, let him follow me: and where I am there also shall my Minister be. If any Man minister to me, him will my Father honour.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

To lose our Lives by loving them, and to preserve them by losing them, are, seemingly, manifest Contradictions, yet are those serious moral Truths delivered by Jesus Christ in this holy Gospel, and which deserve the serious Attention of all Christians who sincerely desire to save their Souls, and be happy. However natural it is to love our Lives and to seek by all Means to save and preserve them, yet this must be done with a more extensive View
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than to a corporal Life in this World. We are chiefly to regard the eternal Life of our Body and Soul in the World to come. Our corporal Life can only be preserved and enjoyed a few uncertain Years, when Death will put an End to it, but the Life both of Body and Soul in the other World will be for ever, never to have any End. It is this Life we are to be solicitous and careful about, and if Circumstances should require, rather not only to run a Hazard, but even to lose our corporal Life, as the holy Martyrs did, and all we have in the World, than lose our Souls and our Bodies for all Eternity. A Loss, once incurred, never to be repaired. It is in this Sense we are to understand what our blessed Saviour here says; *He that loveth his Life shall lose it: and he that hateth his Life in this World, keepeth it unto Life eternal.* If we set so great a Value upon our Life, as in order to preserve it we consent to do any Thing contrary to the Duty we owe to God, tho' we may preserve it as to this World, we shall lose it for ever in the next. When we love either ourselves, or the Riches and Enjoyments of this World so far as to offend God in order to preserve what we love, we make a very foolish Choice; for, as our blessed Lord says in another Place, *What will it avail a Man, if he gains the whole World, and suffers the Loss of his own Soul.* St. Matt. chap. xvi. ver. 26. What Advantage, what Profit to be Lord of the whole World, Master of the Universe, if thereby

thereby a Christian comes to lose his Soul? Nothing in the World, all its Honours, Riches and Pleasures are no valuable Exchange for a Soul. Let us suppose we did enjoy all that we can possibly wish or desire, or that the World can give, and that we were to possess this for a long Series of Years, as long as we live, and at the End, when we come to die, find that thereby we have lost our Soul, how miserable shall we be! This World and all that is in it, is transitory and of short Duration, and lasts but a small Space of Time, for such and no more is one Man's Life, but his Soul is immortal and shall live for ever. Time passes quickly away, and will soon be over, and Eternity follows without End, always to remain. This Eternity is either good or bad, happy or miserable, and our Souls must be happy in one, or miserable in the other! What is there then that can recompense the Loss of a Soul condemned to be for ever miserable? Let this be considered seriously, and it will be acknowledged that the Saints and holy Martyrs were truly wise, who chuse rather to lose all they had, and part with their Lives, and that by Torments the most cruel and exquisite, as did *St. Laurence*, than by seeking to save them, or any Thing in this World hazard the Loss of their Souls. And if we acknowledge them to have been truly wise in the Choice they made, shall we not imitate them? Are not our Souls as dear to us? Ought we not to set as great a Value upon them? Yes surely.

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Let us then do as they did, and like them despise and condemn this World, and make it our chief and only Care to save our Souls, and be happy in the next World. What we must do in order to this, Jesus Christ himself tells us, when he says, *If any Man minister to me, let him follow me.* Giving us thereby to understand, that to be his true Disciples, and to save our Souls, we must follow him in the Way he has walked before us, that is, in the Way of the Cross, or the narrow Path which leads to Life. This he more expressly mentions in another Place; *If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me.* St. Matt. chap. xvi. ver. 24. Self-denial and Mortification are Duties incumbent upon every one who professes to believe the Gospel. They are Marks of our Christian Profession, Signs by which we may know that we belong to Jesus Christ. We cannot be his Disciples on any other Terms; and tho' it may sound harsh and unpleasant to the Ears of Wordlings, yet, to a Christian, one who is really so, they are no ways disagreeable, since nothing is more just and equitable than that Soldiers should follow their Leader and Captain, or that the Members of Christ's mystical Body should be like him their Head: but how unlike are they to him, and how little Reason have they to call themselves his Disciples, who will not deny themselves in the smallest Matter; who are uneasy and impatient when every Thing does
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not happen according to their Fancies and Inclinations; and who murmur and repine, fret and are uneasy at every little Cross or Disappointment they meet? All such have Reason to suspect they shall be rejected by him as Enemies to his Cross, and be sent away with *I know you not*. St. Matt. chap. xxv. Christians! we must be content, we must be willing to deny ourselves, and patiently suffer whatever God shall please to send, or permit to happen to us. This is to follow him and to serve him. If thus we serve and follow him here, we shall be happy with him hereafter. This he expressly tells us, saying: *If any Man minister to me, him will my Father honour*. How great an Encouragement this, to serve and follow Christ! The Servants of God may here pass their Lives in Contempt and Obscurity, in Sufferings and Hardships, but this will only be for a little Time, the Contempt and Scorn with which they may be treated by Sinners will be soon over, and the Glory and Happiness with which God will one Day, honour them, shall last for ever. He will give an eternal Kingdom to those who despise the vain Honours and sinful Pleasures of the World, and are content for his Sake to be looked upon as mean and contemptible in the Eyes of Worldlings. If the Just do not here live and appear according to the grand Monde in Pomp and Splendor, our divine Redeemer did not, and they may say, our Kingdom is not of this World; we are dead to this World and our Life is hid with Christ,
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and when he who is our Life shall appear at the last Day, then shall we shine with him in Glory. Then to the humble, mortified and devout Christian, who denied himself, took up his Cross and followed Christ, will be given all the Glories of Heaven and a never-fading Crown of Bliss. What a glorious Recompence will this be for those Crosses or Troubles we may here endure! From hence it will appear a truly prudent Choice to deny ourselves and to follow Christ, that we may be thus honoured by him and his heavenly Father. Let us now ask ourselves this Question: Is it not much better to deny ourselves, and to suffer here for a little while, and afterwards to be happy for ever, than to follow the World, and for a short, transitory and imaginary Happiness here, run the Hazard of being eternally miserable hereafter? If we have any Share of true Prudence; if we consult our real Interest, we shall not balance a Moment in our Choice. We shall chuse to suffer here with Christ and his Saints, that we may reign with them in the Kingdom of Heaven.

ASPIRATIONS.

O Jesus, the eternal Source of all Good, whom to love and to serve is to be truly wise, deliver me from so great a Folly as to prefer this World, or any Thing in it, to the Salvation of my Soul. May I never put the transient Pleasures of this Life in Competition with

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those

those solid and lasting ones of the other. Shall I, for the gaining any thing in this World, or even to save my Life, hazard the Loss of my Soul by offending thee? No, my God, rather let me suffer the Loss of all I have. I am content to indure Hardships, Losses, Poverty and Indigence. All this shall be easy and welcome so I but save my Soul. I am contented to be miserable here, if I be happy hereafter.

Ah my God and my All! what is there in this World that can be compared with thee, and the happy Enjoyments of thy glorious Presence? O how trifling, and insignificant is the World and all its vain Delights to a Soul who loves thee? May I love thee, dearest Lord, and place all my Happiness in thee. Thou hast made me, and^e for thyself, O may my Heart be ever unquiet till it come to rest in thee; for *whom have I in Heaven but thee, and what is there upon Earth that I desire but thee?* Psal. 72.

O glorious St. Laurence, who didst so generously lay down your Life, and didst endure such cruel Torments, pray for me a poor Sinner, and obtain for me the Grace that I may so lose my Life here, as to find it in Heaven hereafter.

AUGUST 15.

Assumption of the B. V. MARY

THIS Day is a Festival in Honour of the glorious Assumption of the blessed Virgin *Mary*, who, according to the pious Tradition of the Church, was, after her Death, assumed Body and Soul into Heaven. The universal Opinion of the Church that she was so assumed, is grounded on the following Reasons. 1. We read of many Bodies of the Saints that had been dead which rose when the Graves were opened at the expiring of Jesus Christ upon the Cross. *St. Matt.* chap. xxvii. ver. 52. The same Privilege of rising in her Body may certainly be supposed to have been granted to the Blessed Virgin. 2. We may consider that the Flesh of the blessed Virgin was, in some Sort, the Flesh of Christ, and consequently incorruptible; and what pious Christian would not be shocked even to think that the Body of the blessed Virgin Mother of God was given to be devoured of Worms? 3. The primitive Church, which was very industrious in seeking after the Relics of the Apostles, *St. Stephen* and other Saints, makes no mention of the Relics of the Virgin *Mary*. These Reasons and the Authority of several Fathers and Writers of the fifth and sixth Ages, and the unanimous Consent of the following Ages, have confirmed the pious Opinion of her Assumption, which

St. *Juvenal*, Patriarch of *Jerusalem* (cited by Father *Thomasin* in his Treatise of the Feasts of the Church, Lib. ii. chap. 22.) and who assisted at the Council of *Calcedon*, calls the most antient and venerable Tradition of Antiquity. It must be very rash and temerarious to deny that which has been so many Ages received by a Consent so universal, an Approbation so uniform of the *Greeks* and *Latins*, *Eastern* and *Western* Churches. Nor is it any solid Objection that we find nothing delivered about it as certain in the first Ages of the Church. It is abundantly sufficient that after the Council of *Ephesus* had pronounced Anathema against *Nestorius* and his Adherents for denying the blessed Virgin to be the Mother of God, the Veneration of her became more public, and that the Church then enquired more particularly into the Circumstances of her Death, and found good Reasons to believe that she was assumed Body and Soul into Heaven, though she has never declared it an Article of Faith. There are many Points which may be credited, though not determined by her infallible Authority, or by certain and demonstrative Proofs, and this we are sure of, that we run no Risque of being deceived when we follow the Opinion of the Church, though the Matter be not infallibly certain, but only grounded on a reasonable Supposition and highly probable.

The antient Martyrologies of *Ufuardus*, *Bede*, and *Ado*, Archbishop of *Vienna*, speak of this Festival

Festival under the Title of the Dormition, or falling asleep of the blessed Virgin. *Dormitio sanctæ Genitricis Dei Mariæ.* Wherein they acknowledge her Death, but say that her Body was no where to be found on Earth. But the Opinion of her Assumption after her Death becoming more and more generally to be received, the Council of *Mayence* in the Year 313, and the Capitulars of *Charlemain* ordain the Feast of the Assumption to be kept, and speak of it as a Truth not be doubted; and all the Writers of succeeding Times speak not of the Dormition but of the Assumption of the Virgin Mother of God, as the learned Father *Thomassin* observes.

Gavant in his Commentaries upon the Rubrics, supposes this Festival began to be celebrated in the *Greek Church* soon after the Council of *Ephesus*, and to be further propagated under the Emperor *Mauritius*. In the western Churches not so early, and among the *French* in the Time of the Emperor *Charles* the Great, by the forementioned Council of *Mayence*, but was kept very solemnly with a Vigil and an Octave. Pope *Nicolaus I.* in his Answer to the *Bulgarians*, speaks of the Vigil as of an ancient Usage, for the Octave; *Sigisbert*, in his Chronicle remarks, that Pope *Leo IV.* in the Year 847, ordained that it should be kept at *Rome*, which was not done before, and is now universally observed throughout the Catholic Church.

The GOSPEL. St. Luke, chap. x. ver. 38.

Now it came to pass as they went, that he entered a certain Town; and a certain Woman named *Martha* received him into her House. 39. And she had a Sister called *Mary* who sitting also at the Lord's Feet, heard his Word. 40. But *Martha* was busy about much serving, who stood and said: Lord, hast thou no Care that my Sister hath left me alone to serve? speak to her, therefore, that she help me. 41. And the Lord answering, said to her: *Martha, Martha*, thou art careful, and art troubled about many Things. 42. But one Thing is necessary, *Mary* hath chosen the best Part which shall not be taken away from her.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

How happy were these two devout Sisters, *Martha* and *Mary*, to receive Jesus Christ into their House! With what tender Affection and Devotion did they entertain him! They were Sisters not more closely united by Nature and Blood than by Grace and the same Sentiments of Piety and Religion. This rendered them dear to Christ, and procured them often the Happiness of receiving him as their Guest. Happy Sisters! thus to be favoured by the Son of God! Happy likewise those devout Souls who by Love receive him in their Hearts, and with whom by Grace he takes up his Residence! The Church on this Feast of the Assumption

sumption proposes to our Consideration how the Blessed Virgin *Mary* received Jesus Christ in her Womb, and carried him therein nine Months, and how, after his sacred Birth, she was constantly and closely united to him by ardent Love and Affection, and in Return, after her holy Death, was received by him into his eternal Habitation, being assumed Body and Soul into Heaven. If it was an Honour and Happiness for *Martha* and *Mary* to receive and entertain our blessed Lord, how much greater was the Happiness of the blessed Virgin to bear him in her Womb, and to become the Mother of the Son of God? No wonder that she was honoured with the extraordinary Privilege of being assumed Body and Soul into Heaven: For if Jesus Christ told his holy Apostles that he was about to go and prepare a Place for them, how much more for his blessed Virgin Mother? We may here then reflect and consider with what Glory and Triumph she was carried by the Angels into Heaven, and there by her divine Son presented to his eternal Father, and placed on a Throne of Glory above the Cherubim and Seraphim, and all the glorified Spirits and blessed Saints. *A Throne was set for the King's Mother on his right Hand.* 3 *Reg.* ch. ii. ver. 20. But if we admire, as we justly may, this sublime Dignity and extraordinary Privilege of the Virgin *Mary*, we may consider it conferred upon her not only as Mother of Jesus Christ, but also in Recompence of her great Love to God, her Purity, Hu-

mility, and her other incomparable Virtues which she practised in the greatest Perfection ; and from hence may learn to be fervent and zealous in the Love and Service of God, by which we may likewise come to partake of her Glory, and share in that Happiness she now enjoys.

We may consider likewise those Words of our Saviour in this Day's Gospel : *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many Things, but one Thing is necessary.* Our blessed Lord does not here condemn or reprove *Martha* for her Hospitality and charitable Entertainment of him, which was a Work of Piety, laudable and to be commended. But he gently reproves her too great Sollicitude and Care about it, and thereby gives us a very useful Instruction, namely, that in good Actions and the Exercises of an active Life we should avoid a too great Anxiety and Hurry in the Performance of them. Our external Works of Piety are best done when performed in a Spirit of Recollection without Impetuosity, or Discomposure of the Mind, and as one Thing is only truly necessary, all our corporal Works of Mercy, all external Acts of Piety are to be used as so many Means to obtain it, and must be performed as conducive to that End. *One Thing is necessary,* says Christ, the Salvation of our Souls not to be obtained but by loving and serving God, and which therefore ought to be our chief and greatest Concern. We may be solicituous and anxious about other Things, but reap no real Advantage

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tage thereby, if they do not conduce to the great End for which we were made. To be solicitous and troubled about the Things of this World, is to place our Care and Concern upon wrong Objects, especially if to procure and obtain them we neglect the Care of our Souls. This, Christians ought seriously and often to reflect on, that it may be as a Spur to excite and stir them up to Diligence and Fervor in the Service of God, and thereby secure the one Thing necessary. If they fail in this, all other Things gained, will be of no Advantage to them: On the contrary, they will find themselves to be very great Losers. This is that better Part signified to us by *Mary's* sitting at the Feet of our Lord, and whom he commended, and said, she had chosen the better Part, which should not be taken from her. It is truly a wise Choice to prefer Heaven to Earth, the Service of God before the Service of the World, the happy Recompence of which shall by no one be taken from us: we shall one Day receive it, and shall enjoy it for ever. How unhappy then! how unthinking and foolish are those who are anxious and careful only for this Life! who wilfully run the hazard of losing Heaven and eternal Happiness, by addicting themselves to the sinful and unlawful Pleasures and Enjoyments of this World, which they cannot enjoy long, and know not how soon they may be deprived of by Death, and perhaps when they least think of it! O Sinners! Let the Danger of losing your Souls for ever move you to a serious and

sincere Change of Life and Manners now, while you have Time, and before it is too late. Prostrate yourselves at the Feet of your Lord, with true Sorrow and Contrition implore Pardon for your past Sins, sincerely purpose to amend, and beg his Grace to confirm and strengthen you in your good Resolutions. This will intitle you to his Grace and Favour here, and secure your eternal Happiness hereafter.

From what our Saviour here says, that *Mary* had chosen the better Part, may be drawn a further Instruction of great Use, and necessary to be attended to by the good and virtuous Christian. While *Martha* was busy in preparing her charitable Entertainment for Jesus Christ, *Mary* sat at his Feet, feeding her Soul with his divine Instructions, and hearing his admirable Words. This our blessed Lord calls the better Part, and signifies also that the good Works of the active Life are but for a Time, and while we live, after that all those external Works of Charity, will cease and be at an end, but the Part of *Mary*, that is the Union of the Soul with God will remain and subsist for ever. This shews that the contemplative Life, in this Respect, is more excellent than the active, but we must not from thence conclude we are to abandon, or neglect the Functions of the active Life, or the Duties of our State, and what Charity and Justice to others require from us, that we may do nothing but pray and contemplate. As long as this Life lasts, there will be a Necessity of exterior Actions both in regard of ourselves and others, whom by the
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Ties of Nature and Religion we are bound to help and assist. The good Christian, therefore, with respect to that State of Life in which God has placed him must endeavour to join the active and contemplative Life together. Thus while the necessary Duties of his Station are not neglected, his Works of Charity and Devotion may be performed with a right Intention, and in such a Manner as to be no Hindrance, but rather so many Helps to raise up his Soul to God, and to unite himself to him in Prayer and Meditation. This Consideration will help us to direct all the Enterprises of external Zeal, and so regulate our Performances, that a too great Sollicitude, like *Martha*, about others may not hinder a due Attention to ourselves. Happy those who endeavour, and who know how to unite Action to Contemplation, and in whom the Piety of the former disposes their devout Souls the better to taste the Delights of the latter; and the Delights of the latter are as a Reward given to the former. This is truly that better Part, which if we chuse and endeavour for here, will be an Earnest and an Assurance of the much greater Happiness we shall enjoy hereafter.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

Dearest Saviour of my Soul! after thou hast so plainly told me that one Thing alone is necessary, and hast declared it to be, to love and serve thee, shall I foolishly neglect it, to busy myself about empty Trifles, and insignificant Nothings?

Nothings? And, what is all that this World affords? What is the whole Universe, but an empty Nothing in Comparison with thee?

It is from thee, O Jesus, my divine Master, that I learn these sacred Truths; and it is by thee alone, in the Assistance of thy Grace, that I can practise them. O thou who art the only amiable and desirable Good, fix my Heart and Attention wholly on thee. Hast thou not Happiness sufficient that I need seek it elsewhere, or in any Thing but thee? Where can I meet with solid Comfort but at thy sacred Feet, in the Enjoyment of those pure and sweet Delights thou bestowest upon those who love and adhere to thee? Deliver me from all those pretended Necessities that are only produced by inordinate and corrupt Inclinations. Deliver me from every Thing that may hinder or draw me from thy Presence, or make me neglect that better Part, which thou dost recommend. Preserve me, dear Lord, from being solicitous and troubled about many Things, when one only is necessary and deserves my Care. That one is no other than thy very self, whom my Soul longs for, and will seek after. May I seek thee so, as I may find thee! may I remain at thy sacred Feet and be inseparably united to thee. If Duty to my Neighbour, and Charity to others call me forth, do thou accompany me, and be with me to direct all my Actions that they may be done in thee and for thee, that they may be sanctified by thee, and be acceptable to thee.

O Sacred

St. BARTHOLOMEW. *August 24.* 227

O sacred and holy Virgin reigning now with God in Heaven, elevated above all the glorified Spirits and blessed Saints. Look upon me a poor Creature in this Place of Exile ; pray for me, and obtain by your powerful Intercession that I may chuse the better Part ; that I may faithfully serve, and ardently love my God here, and with you enjoy him for ever in Heaven hereafter.

AUGUST 24.

St. BARTHOLOMEW. Apostle.

IT is the more general and probable Opinion that this Apostle is the same Person whom St. *John*, in his Gospel, calls *Nathanael*, and was brought by St. *Philip* to Jesus Christ, who gave him that high Elogium ; *Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no Guile.* St. *John*, chap. i. ver. 47. This is certain, that St. *Bartholomew* was a Disciple of our blessed Lord, and by him chosen to be one of the twelve Apostles. That he was the same Person with *Nathanael* appears from this, that as St. *John* never mentions St. *Bartholomew* in the Number of the Apostles, so the other Evangelists never take any notice of *Nathanael*, on account probably of his having two Names : and we may observe, that in St. *John*, *Philip* and *Nathanael* are joined together, and in the rest of the Evangelists *Philip* and *Bartholomew* are constantly named one after the other, for what other Reason but that they were jointly called to be the Disciples of Jesus Christ ?

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After the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, St. *Bartholomew* carried the glorious Light of the Gospel into *Lycaonia*, *Albania*, *Armenia*, and *India*, and with unwearied Zeal and apostolic Fervor preached Jesus Christ to those Nations, and converted great Numbers to the Christian Faith, carrying with him the Gospel written by St. *Matthew*, which was found there 190 Years after by *Panterus*, a christian Philosopher and celebrated Catechist of *Alexandria*, who travelled into those Parts. From ecclesiastical Writers, and the Lessons for this Feast in the *Roman Breviary*, we are informed, that returning from *India* to the Greater *Armenia*, St. *Bartholomew*, by his zealous Preaching, Miracles, and admirable holy Life, converted *Polymius*, a Prince, with his Queen, and ten Cities, to the Faith of *Christ*, which so far irritated the Pagan Priests, and by their Instigation, *Astyages* the King's Brother, that he commanded the Apostle to be seized, and being fastened to a Cross, to be flea'd alive, about the Year of Christ 42. Thus he sealed with his Blood the Faith he had courageously preached, and as a Reward of his apostolic Labours received a glorious Crown of Martyrdom. His Body was buried in *Albany*, or *Aibinople*, the Capital of the Greater *Armenia*, where he suffered, from thence it was afterwards translated to *Beneventum* in *Italy*, and in the Time of the Emperor *Otho III.* was again translated to *Rome*, and deposited in the
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St. BARTHOLOMEW. *August 24.* 229

Isle of *Tibur*, at *Rome*, where a magnificent Church was afterwards built, and dedicated to him.

The GOSPEL. St. *Luke*, chap. vi. ver. 12.

And it came to pass in those Days, that he went into a Mountain to pray, and he passed the whole Night in the Prayer of God. 13. And when the Day was come, he called unto him his Disciples; and he chose twelve of them (whom he also named Apostles.) 14. *Simon*, whom he surnamed *Peter*, and *Andrew* his Brother, *James* and *John*, *Philip* and *Bartholomew*. 15. *Matthew* and *Thomas*, *James*, the Son of *Alpheus*, and *Simon* who is called *Zelotes*. 16. And *Jude* the Brother of *James*, and *Judas Iscariot* who was the Traitor. 17. And coming down with them he stood in a plain Place, and the Company of his Disciples, and a very great Multitude of People from all *Judea* and *Jerusalem*, and the Sea-Coast both of *Tyre* and *Sidon*. 18. Who were come to hear him, and to be healed of their Diseases. And they that were troubled with unclean Spirits, were cured. 19. And all the Multitude sought to touch him, for Virtue went out from him, and healed all.

REFLECTIONS.

In the Gospel for this Festival, we shall find from what the Evangelist relates, several excellent Subjects for our pious and serious Reflections; many practical, moral Truths pointed out for our Attention and Observance. When

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we read that our blessed Lord went out into a Mountain to pray, and that he passed the whole Night in Prayer, and this particularly before he chose his twelve Apostles ; we are to consider that Jesus Christ did this, not from any Necessity he lay under to pray, but for our Example, and to teach us sometimes to retire from the Noise and Hurry of Multitude and worldly Affairs, and to enter into ourselves by serious Recollection and devout Prayer, and in our Closets, in the peaceful Privacy of Retirement recollect our wandering Thoughts, and gather together our Spirits dissipated by worldly Affairs and Conversation, in order the better and more seriously to attend to the important Business of our Souls. Great are the Advantages, and great is the Necessity of holy Prayer and Meditation. And when we neglect, or frequently upon slight Pretences omit these holy Exercises, it is a certain Sign that our Hearts and Affections are too much set upon the Things of this World, and our spiritual Concerns left to Hazard, and but little thought on ; but if Prayer and Recollection are necessary and advantageous, Solitude and Retirement are excellent Helps to Prayer and Contemplation, wherein we shall meet with those interior Comforts and Satisfaction which in vain we think to find in much Company and Conversation, in idle and unprofitable Talk, and trifling Amusements. Alas ! what Profit ? what real Good, or what Benefit do we reap from squandering away so much of our precious
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Time, in spending so many Hours so little to the main Purpose? And while whole Days are consumed in worldly Business and Diversions, to think much and be unwilling to give half an Hour to serious Thought and Reflection? Let us learn from the Example of our blessed Saviour related in this holy Gospel, to retire, at proper Times, that we may converse with God in Prayer and Meditation, wherein we may with Freedom lay open to him all our spiritual Wants and Necessities, and from his Goodness obtain Relief; and as it is hard for the best Christians not to forget themselves sometimes and not to have their Minds dissipated by the Hurry and Multiplicity of Business and Conversation, it is by Retirement and Recollection the Dust thus contracted is to be wiped away, and by seriously entering into ourselves we may perceive wherein we have been defective in our Christian Duties, and may consider how to correct those Defects. This Retirement and Recollection is particularly recommended on extraordinary Occasions, and before we undertake any Thing of Importance, or when we deliberate about the Choice of a State, and therein to beg the Direction and Assistance of God's holy Spirit, that whatever we are about to do, may be to his Honour and Glory, and the Good of our Souls. This Instruction Christ gives us, who, about to chuse his twelve Apostles, retired to a Mountain, and passed the whole Night in Prayer.

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We may also observe in this Gospel that Jesus Christ in chusing his twelve Apostles, chose those who were poor, illiterate Men, mean and contemptible in the Eyes of the World, wherein we may admire the Wisdom of God, who, as St. Paul says, *bath chosen the foolish Things of this World that he may confound the Wise, and the weak Things of the World. God has chosen, that he may confound the Strong,* 1 Cor. chap. i. ver. 27. and this to let us know that the Conversion of the World to the Christian Faith was the Work of God, and not the Effect of human Wisdom and Power; and we may further learn from hence that as the Apostles were thus chosen by Jesus Christ, tho' they were poor and illiterate, so, Meanness of Birth, a low Station, and ordinary Capacity or Parts, are no Bar or Hindrance from being Servants of God, and to receive from him great Graces and Favours. And if we are not endowed with extraordinary Talents, and great Learning, yet by Humility, Zeal, and sincere Endeavours, we may be able to do much Good to others, and preach to them, at least, by good Example; and be ourselves dear to God, if contented with our Lot, we keep under and subdue all Pride and Ambition, and seek not to be exalted, or aim at higher Things, and what is above our Capacity or Rank. God, who giveth Grace to the Humble, and resisteth the Proud, will supply what may seem wanting in us, and the lower we are in the Eyes of the World and
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our own, the higher we shall be in his, and the less Figure we make here, may be one Means to make a greater hereafter. As for those who are placed above others in Rank and Station, and on whom he has bestowed greater Gifts and larger Talents, they must faithfully correspond with the Graces they have received, and make a right Use of their superior Parts and Station, by employing them in what may promote the Glory of God, and the Good of their Neighbour, and in this to imitate the holy Apostles who spent their Lives in preaching the Gospel to all Nations, and bringing them to the saving Knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We are further to consider that as with God there is no Exception of Persons and as no State or Condition of Life is in itself an Obstacle to Salvation, so no Christian can with Truth say, he cannot attend as he ought to the Service of God. If the Providence of God has blest us with Riches, and raised us above others in Rank and Station; these Riches, this Dignity, is conferred upon us that by a Right Use of them we may honour God, and do good to others. Riches, Titles and Dignities thus used, so far from hindering us from being good Christians, will serve to render us more so, and prove excellent Means to bring us to eternal Bliss. If we move in a lower Sphere, and are destined to Business and Employment, these very Employments exercised with the Spirit of a Christian, in Obedience to the Order of God, become pleasing to him, and is doing his Will
here,

here, who will reward us hereafter. Employments indeed that are in themselves sinful, or may be the immediate Occasion of sinning ourselves, or making others to sin, are not to be followed; they must be abandoned however lucrative they may be, for what will all the Riches in the World profit us, if gaining them by unlawful and sinful Means, we come to lose our Souls? Is our Condition low in the World, or, are we obliged to Work and hard Labour to procure our Living? Do we suffer under Poverty and Indigence? This is so far from being a Hindrance, that, on the contrary, it may prove a great Help to our future Happiness, and will undoubtedly be so, when this Poverty is patiently submitted to, as to the holy Will of God; when these Labours are sanctified by Content, and when applied to in Obedience to him who appoints to every one what, in his unerring Wisdom, he knows best and fittest for every one. *Blessed are ye Poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.* St. Luke, chap. vi. ver. 20. Happy the virtuous, poor, labouring Man, who, while he sweats and toils for the Necessaries of Life, may be at the same Time working for Heaven and Happiness everlasting! Thus in all States and Conditions we may, if we please, mind our Duty to God, and save our Souls, and if we lose them, it will be our own Fault, and we must answer for it.

ASPIRATIONS.

All thy Actions dear Redeemer of Mankind! are so many Lessons to me, so many kind Instructions and Admonitions. O give me Grace to make a right Use of them. Let me not so far engage in wordly affairs as not to give some Part of my Time to thee. Thou didst pass whole Nights in Prayer for my Sake, and shall I think much, or be unwilling to spend some Time with thee? No, dear Lord, I will delight to converse with thee in Prayer, and think it both an Honour and Happiness to have the Liberty of approaching thee. Draw me, dear Lord, sometimes at least into Solitude and Retirement, that secluded from the Noise and Tumult of the World I may the more freely think of thee, and the Affairs of my Soul.

O thou great and all-wise Disposer of every Thing! let me adore and submit to all the Dispensations of thy Providence in my regard. Whatever State or Condition thou shalt place me in, may I be truly content, and seek for nothing but to do thy holy Will. If thou shalt call me forth to appear in public, may all my Endeavours be to promote thy Honour and Glory and my Neighbour's Good. If thou place me in a private and low Station, teach me to live to thee and myself, and to be content with an humble Privacy. There will I stifle and bury all Pride and Ambition, and by
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considering my own Unworthiness extinguish all Thoughts of Vanity. I will remember that to be great, I must be little, and that to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven I must be humble and poor in Spirit, and by thy Grace assisting me, I will endeavour so to be.

Holy St. *Bartholomew*, pray for me that I may be faithful to my Duty in whatever Condition of Life I am placed. Obtain for me by your Prayers an ardent Love of God, and a perfect Love of my Neighbour. O pray for me that I may love and serve God here, so as to be happy with him hereafter.

S E P T E M B E R 8.

Nativity of the B. V. *Mary*.

THAT the blessed Virgin *Mary* was of the Tribe of *Juda*, and of the royal Family of *David*, is evident from sacred Scripture. That her Father and Mother were St. *Joachim* and St. *Ann*, is the Tradition of the Catholic Church, grounded on the Authority of several ancient Fathers. Any Thing farther concerning her Nativity is not to be found in the holy Evangelists. Hence this Festival is not of so early an Institution as some others. The first who speaks of it is *Fulgentius*, Bishop of *Chartres*, about the Year 1000, and he mentions it as a Feast but newly established ;
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and Cardinal *Baronius*, in his Notes upon the Martyrology, acknowledges the Observation of it not to have been so ancient as some have imagined. in *St. Bernard's* Time it was universally observed in the Church, as appears from his 174th Epistle; and seems to have been first received and kept in *France*, and from thence passed into *Italy* and the rest of the Western Churches. Pope *Innocent IV.* who died in the Year 1254, ordered it to be kept with an Octave, and *Gregory XI.* added the Vigil to it. See *F. Thomasin, Lib. 2. C. 2.* of his Treatise of the Feasts, and *Gavant Com. in Rub. Sect. 7. C. 11.*

As a Proof of what has been said, we may observe that *St. Augustin* affirms that, in his Time, the Church kept no other Feast of a Nativity but that of Jesus Christ, and *St. John Baptist*: The Reason may be, for that the Gospel makes mention of no other Nativity than of Christ and his holy Precursor. But from hence can be drawn no solid or reasonable Objection against celebrating the Nativity of the blessed Virgin, who may be considered in this Festival, as the *Aurora* to the Sun of Justice, and by whom the promised *Messias*, or Saviour was given to the World, and, is a just Reason for us to rejoice in her Nativity, and to keep an annual Commemoration of it.

The GOSPEL. St. Matt. chap. i. ver. 1.

The Book of the Generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of *David*, the Son of *Abraham*. 2. *Abraham* begot *Isaac*, and *Isaac* begot *Jacob*. And *Jacob* begot *Judas* and his Brethren. 3. And *Judas* begot *Phares* and *Zara* of *Thamar*. And *Phares* begot *Efron*; and *Efron* begot *Aram*. 4. And *Aram* begot *Aminadab*. And *Aminadab* begot *Naassen*. And *Naassen* begot *Salmon*. 5. And *Salmon* begot *Booz* of *Rahab*. And *Booz* begot *Obed* of *Ruth*. And *Obed* begot *Jesse*. 6. And *Jesse* begot *David* the King. And *David* the King begot *Solomon*, of her that had been the Wife of *Urias*. 7. And *Solomon* begot *Roboam*. And *Roboam* begot *Abia*. And *Abia* begot *Afa*. 8. And *Afa* begot *Josaphat*. And *Josaphat* begot *Joram*. And *Joram* begot *Ozias*. 9. And *Ozias* begot *Joatham*. And *Joatham* begot *Achaz*. And *Achaz* begot *Ezechias*. 10. And *Ezechias* begot *Manasses*. And *Manasses* begot *Amon*. And *Amon* begot *Josias*. 11. And *Josias* begot *Jechonias* and his Brethren in the Transmigration to *Babylon*. 12. And after the Transmigration to *Babylon*, *Jechonias* begot *Salathiel*. And *Salathiel* begot *Zorababel*. 13. And *Zorababel* begot *Abiud*. And *Abiud* begot *Eliacim*. And *Eliacim* begot *Azor*. 14. And *Azor* begot *Sadoc*. And *Sadoc* begot *Achim*. And *Achim* begot *Eliud*. 15. And *Eliud* begot *Eleazar*. And *Eleazar* begot *Nathan*. And
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Nathan begot Jacob. 19. And Jacob begot Joseph the Husband of MARY, of whom was born JESUS who is called CHRIST.

REFLECTIONS.

In reading this holy Gospel we may consider how the Evangelist deduces the Genealogy of St. Joseph from Abraham to King David, and from that Monarch thro' a long Series of Princes who sat upon the Throne of Judah. As the blessed Virgin was of the same Tribe of Judah, and of the same Family of David, in considering the illustrious Descent of Joseph, we behold that of Mary, who tho' descended from a royal Family, yet knew nothing of the Pomp and Grandeur of it, being reduced to a low and mean Condition, her espoused Husband following the poor and laborious Trade of a Carpenter. Instructive Instance, how uncertain and unstable are all wordly Honours and Dignities, how subject they are to Vicissitude and Change. To consider David and Solomon, and many other Princes their Descendants shining in all the Pomp of regal Glory and Power, and to behold the blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, Heirs of their illustrious House, unknown to, and unregarded by the great World, labouring under the Difficulties of a mean and private Life, but patiently submitting to the Dispensations of Providence, may fill us with Wonder, but by considering this we may learn how God is often pleased to permit his best Servants, and

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who are dearest to him, to suffer Hardships and Difficulties in this World, under narrow and poor Circumstances. He had designed the blessed Virgin to be the Mother of his Son, the promised *Messias*, and therefore it was necessary she should be of the Lineage and Family of *David*, from whose Loins the *Messias* was to spring. But yet, he would not restore her Family to its former Grandeur, that the humble Birth of *Mary* might correspond to the humble Nativity of Jesus her divine Son, who coming into the World to destroy Sin, would by Humility destroy Pride, the Origin and Fountain of all Sin. These Circumstances of the humble Nativity of Jesus and *Mary*, give useful Instructions to all Christians of whatever Degree they may be, poor or rich. Those who are rich, and who are distinguished from the Vulgar by Nobility of Blood, by high Descent and by superior Rank, may here learn not to Pride themselves therein, nor to condemn the Poor, or those of a lower Degree, whose Station is thus sanctified in that of Jesus Christ and his Virgin Mother. The Poor may here comfort themselves under their mean and narrow Circumstances, and by Patience and Resignation to the Will of God sanctify all their Hardships. By which means, however they may appear contemptible in the Eyes of the World, they may be great in the Sight of God, and by him, after Death, be raised up and exalted to eternal Honour and Glory in Heaven.

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As every Thing is admirable, so every Thing is truly instructive in what regards this Day's Festival. The Birth of Princes is generally attended with Pomp and Eclat. The News is soon spread thro' every Part of their Dominions. But the Nativity of the blessed Virgin was quite otherwise, every Thing relating is done in Silence and without the least Noise or outward Shew. It is not to be doubted but that she came out of her Mother's Womb full of Grace, and replenished with the Holy Ghost, and that this divine Spirit conferred upon her daily new Graces to render her more worthy of the Honour designed her of being the Mother of the Son of God. But all these Treasures of Grace and Virtue were hid from the World, and the Holy Ghost which directed all the Circumstances of her Nativity, and the first Moments of a Life so precious, manifested in her that Humility with which Jesus Christ was to be born of her. This was the Method God chuse in regard of her whose eminent Dignity raised her far above all the Monarchs of the Universe. Admirable Rule for our Conduct! We are instructed not to ambiate or to be desirous of outward Shew, to draw the Eyes and attention of others upon us, but to decline every Thing that may favour of Ostentation, or a Desire of being taken notice of and esteemed for what we do. Pride is a dangerous Enemy and cannot be too much guarded against. Vanity and an itching Desire to be commended and admired too easily

glide into and mix with our Actions, and our best Security against these Enemies is an humble Privacy, desiring no other Witness or Applause of what we do but God, seeking to please him only and not the World. It is the Gospel Spirit of Humility and Moderation which will best direct us in every Thing we do; and which will teach us to reconcile a superior Station to Christian Simplicity, and in the midst of Riches to be poor in Spirit. Hence those of high Birth and Fortune may learn, that while the Rank they hold in the World admits of, and seems to require something of State, not to admire, or be fond of it; to let Decency, not Pride have the Direction of what is to be done, and not to indulge a sinful Vanity under the specious Pretence of maintaining Dignity. The Humility of a Christian is thus to be shewn, and this is one useful Lesson we are taught from the private and humble Nativity of the blessed Virgin.

We may further consider those Words in the Conclusion of this Gospel; *Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.* It is with a particular and instructive Design that the blessed Virgin's Name is here mentioned, and wherein are contained those great and admirable Privileges conferred upon her as the Mother of Jesus Christ the Son of God. *Mary* signifies Star of the Sea, Lady, or exalted. And such she truly is. She is that bright Star, by keeping which in our Eye, and following it, we may securely sail thro' all dangerous Storms,
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and escape those Rocks and Shelves to which we are exposed in this World, very fitly compared to a Sea, and thro' which we must pass before we can arrive at the Port of heavenly Bliss. Let *Mary* then be our Guide and the Pole-Star by which we steer; that is, let us imitate those admirable Virtues of which she was, upon Earth, so perfect a Pattern. Let us imitate her Humility, her Patience and Submission to the Will of God, her perfect Detachment from the Things of this World, her admirable Purity and great Love of God. The Practice of these Virtues will render our Voyage safe and secure from all Storms the Devil can raise, and from all the Attacks whereby he seeks to sink our Vessel. Let us Honour this Virgin Mother of Jesus, and devoutly celebrate her holy Nativity, and while we honour her, praise God for the Graces and Favours he was pleased to confer upon her, chusing her to be the Mother of his Son, on which Account, she says of herself, *All Generations shall call me blessed.* St. Luke, chap. i. ver. 48. A sufficient Justification of that Honour and Veneration the Catholic Church does, and always has paid to this holy and glorious Virgin, whose Intercession will be very powerful in our Behalf, if we devoutly ask it, and endeavour to render ourselves worthy of it by imitating her Virtues. But if we live in Sin, and offend her divine Son by our wicked Lives, in vain we flatter ourselves with Hopes of her Protection; in vain we keep her Feasts, or think to honour

her, the Mother of God. This deserves our serious Attention, that we may not deprive ourselves of the Mercies and Blessings designed us, nor these holy Festivals of Piety and Devotion be rendered fruitless to us.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

In the Nativity of thy blessed Virgin Mother I behold the *Aurora* to that Morning, wherein thou, O Jesus, the true Son of Justice, didst arise to bless our dark World with thy glorious Rays, to enlighten us who sat in Darkness and the Shadow of Death, and to direct our Feet into the Way of Peace. I adore this wonderful Effect of thy Bounty; and, O may I never be ungrateful to thy Love. Give me, dear Redeemer of my Soul, a true Sense of what thou hast done for me; having delivered me from the Slavery of Sin, and the Tyranny of the Devil; give me Grace that I may from this Moment remain faithful to thee, and mercifully bestow upon me all those Virtues which may make me acceptable to thee.

How can I reflect, O sweet Saviour of Mankind! upon thy infinite Love to me, and not love thee again! O pierce my Heart with the Dart of divine Love, that I may be set on Fire with those holy Flames. O, that I could love thee in some Degree as thou deservest, and that I may never love any Thing but thee!

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Adorable Ways of Providence to be revered and admired ! O God ! thou didst chuse the the blessed Virgin to be the Mother of thy Son. Thou didst chuse her from the royal Family of *David*, and yet wouldst have her poor, and come into the World without any of the Grandeurs and Honours of her Ancestors. This was the Dispensation of thy Providence and, by it thou didst shew that thy Ways, O God, are widely different from ours, as thy Thoughts are from our Thoughts. By the humble Nativity of holy *Mary*, and the Lowness of her Condition, how dost thou confound our Pride and Ambition, we who are apt to be so fond of Grandeur, and who so often proudly value ourselves upon empty Titles and wordly Honours.

O Lord, root out of my Heart all Pride and Ambition, and make me truly humble. Let me never murmur nor repine if thy Providence place me in a low and mean Condition, make me content and pleased to serve thee in a private Life, and count it my Happiness to be like Jesus, my Saviour, and his blessed Mother.

Sacred Virgin, Mother of my Saviour ! join your more powerful Prayers to mine, and obtain for me what I now humbly ask ; pray for me, O holy Mother of God, now, and at the Hour of my Death. *Amen.*

S E P T E M B E R 14.

Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

THE sacred Cross of our blessed Saviour having been miraculously discovered and found by St. *Helen*, Mother of *Constantine* the Great, in the Year 326, was by that pious Princess deposited in a magnificent Church built by her for that Purpose in *Jerusalem*, where it remained till the Year 614, when *Cosroes* King of *Persia* took the City of *Jerusalem* and pillaged it, carrying the Patriarch *Zacharias* Prisoner into *Persia*, and with him the holy Cross of Christ. This Revolution happened under the Empire of *Heraclius*, Successor to *Phocas*, who in vain endeavoured, even on very dishonourable Conditions to make Peace with *Cosroes*, grown insolent and puffed up by the great Success of his Arms. In this great Distress the Emperor had recourse to Heaven for Help, and by Fasting and Prayer implored the Assistance of almighty God, who heard his Prayers and granted his Request: For having gathered an Army, he fought the *Persians* and overcame them in three Battles, and by these Victories recovered *Jerusalem* and all *Pa'estine*, and obliged *Cosroes* to secure himself by Flight, who retiring into *Seleucia* fell sick as he was about to pass the River *Tygris*, when thinking his End was near, he declared for his Successor

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Medarses his younger Son : But *Siroes* the elder Son, provoked at his Exclusion from the Throne, gained over to his Side the Remainder of the *Persian* Forces, and by their Assistance seized upon his Father and Brother, and having flung them into Prison, there murdered them. After this he concluded a Peace with *Heraclius*, one and the chief Condition of which was, to restore the Cross of Christ ; which *Siroes* did, and set at Liberty the Patriarch *Zacharias*.

Thus the holy Cross returned again to the Christians, after it had been fourteen Years in the Possession of the *Persians*. The Emperor having recovered this sacred Relic transported it to *Jerusalem* in the Year 628, and carrying it on his own Shoulders with great Solemnity, placed it on Mount *Calvary*, where it had first been carried by the Saviour of the World. This Piety of *Heraclius* was illustrated by a miraculous and surprising Circumstance, for going out of the Gate of *Jerusalem* which leads to Mount *Calvary*, magnificently attired in his imperial Robes, attended by the Patriarch, his Courtiers and Officers, with the Cross on his Shoulders, he found himself suddenly stopped, and unable to move further. The more he endeavoured to go on, the more strongly he seemed to be withheld. This Accident astonished *Heraclius* and all who were present : when the holy Patriarch thus addressed himself to the Emperor : Consider, Royal Sir, whether the Magnificence and Pomp of your imperial Attire be a proper
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Dress, and suitable to the Humility and Poverty of Jesus Christ, or to carry his holy Cross. The religious Prince understood the good Bishop, and immediately laying aside his Robes, covered himself with an ordinary poor Garment, then putting off his Shoes, and walking barefoot, carried the Cross without any Difficulty; and fixed it in the same Place from whence it had been taken away by the *Persians*. In Memory of this Recovery of the holy Cross, and its being restored to its primitive Place, the Church has ever since observed the 14th Day of *September* as an annual Feast, under the Title of the Exaltation of the holy Cross.

The GOSPEL. St. John, chap. xii. ver. 31.

Now is the Judgment of the World : Now shall the Prince of this World be cast out.
 32. And I, if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all Things to myself. 33 (Now this he said, signifying what Death he should die.)
 34. The Multitude answering him : We have heard out of the Law, that Christ abideth for ever; and how say'st thou : The Son of Man must be lifted up ? Who is this Son of Man ?
 35. Jesus therefore, said to them : Yet a little while, the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, that the Darkness overtake you not. And he that walketh in Darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. 39. Whilst you have the Light, believe in the
 Light,

Light, that you may be the Children of Light.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us consider what our blessed Lord says in this Gospel: *Now is the Judgment of this World: now shall the Prince of this World be cast out.* Long had the Devil reigned in the World by Idolatry and Superstition, and had detained the Captive Sons of *Adam* under the hard Yoke of his Tyranny, and for this he is here called the *Prince of this World*. By Sin he gained a Dominion over us, and by Sin we became his Slaves; but Jesus Christ by his sacred Passion and Death, delivered us from his Power, and broke the Chains of our cruel Servitude. By the preaching of his holy Gospel he chased the Devil from the Empire he had so long usurped, and planted the Worship of the true living God in Room of Idols. He cast him out of the Hearts of Men by the Infusion of his holy Grace; and we are no more under the Dominion and Slavery of Sin, but restored to the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God, and it is our Duty not only to return Thanks to our Redeemer for this Grace and Favour conferred upon us, but also to take care to preserve that Liberty, and no more permit ourselves to be drawn into Slavery again by Sin, or abuse the Bounty shewn to us; for it must be a very ungrateful Return to his Love to give up our Liberty purchased at so dear a Rate as the Blood
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of Jesus Christ, and to become Slaves again to the Devil and the World, by hearkening to their Persuasions and following their Maxims. Let us not be so ungrateful to God, nor so foolish in regard of ourselves. Christians ! consider this well, and make some practical Reflections upon it and upon what Christ says farther in this Gospel : *If I be lifted up from the Earth, I will draw all Things to myself.* Our blessed Lord was lifted up from the Earth, upon his Cross, and by that has drawn all Faithful Believers to him. By this was the Prince of this World, the Devil, cast out of that Possession he had so long usurped ; and the Cross of Christ became triumphant ; the whole World was enlightened with the bright Rays of his Truth, and as we have the Happiness to enjoy the Blessing of this Light, we ought to make a right Use of it.

Jesus Christ said to the Jews : *Whilst you have the Light, believe in the Light, that you may be the Children of Light.* What he says to them is an excellent and necessary Admonition to us. We are Christians : we enjoy the glorious Light of the Gospel, and live in the Profession of the Catholic Faith. So far we may be said to believe in the Light, and to be Children of it ; but we must not stop there and go no further. It is not a speculative Belief only, in him, but a practical one likewise that he requires of us. Faith in him, and of all the sacred Truths he has revealed in his holy Word, and teaches us by his
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holy Catholic Church, is absolutely necessary to Salvation, for *without Faith it is impossible to please God.* Heb. chap. xi. ver. 16. But it must not be a naked, empty Faith, void of Charity and good Works, such a Faith, the Apostle assures us, is dead. It must be a Faith working by Charity in Jesus Christ; that is a Faith which shews itself by good Works. To be true Children of Light we must let our Faith have a proper Influence upon our Conduct, and live according to the Rules and Precepts of that holy Gospel we profess to believe, and walk in that true practical Light he has made known to us, by serving him in Holiness and Righteousness, and in an exact Observance of all his Commandments: for to that End he has redeemed us, that casting away all Impiety, we should live soberly, justly, and piously, expecting the second Coming of him our Saviour, and thereby shew that we belong to him, who, as St. Peter says, 1 Ep. chap. i. ver. 18. has redeemed us not by corruptible Silver or Gold, but by his precious Blood, and made us the Sons of God. We are therefore obliged to make it appear that we are such in our Lives and Conversations, by abstaining from all Evil, and doing Good, the true Marks of Children of Light, or Sons of God.

This being a certain and sure Truth, what can be thought of those unhappy Christians, who so far from shewing these Marks of being Children of Light, do by their wicked and irregular

regular Lives make it evidently appear that they are Children of Darkneſs? Alas, how much are they to be pitied, and how dangerous is their Condition! Of ſuch it may be truly ſaid; they love Darkneſs rather than Light, and chuſe to walk in the dark Ways of Sin, which leads to eternal Death. O that ſuch Sinners would ſeriously conſider, and not let the Enemy of their Souls deceive them to their Ruin by wrong and Miſtaken Notions of walking in the Light, and being ſafe becauſe they make an outward Profeſſion of believing in Jeſus Chriſt. What will this ſignify, if at the ſame Time we reſuſe to do what he commands, and do thoſe Things he poſitively forbids? He has expreſſly ſaid, *Not every one who ſays to me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that doeth the Will of my Father who is in Heaven, he ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* St. Matt. chap. vii. ver. 21. While we continue in Sin we walk in the dark, and, whatever we may think, ſhall never find the Way to Heaven. Sin obſtructs the Light of Grace, and hinders it from ſhining upon us, and in the End Sinners will find the ſad Effects of their Folly when it may be too late to retrieve it. This their unhappy Condition the Wiſe-Man elegantly, and in a very moving Manner deſcribes, introducing Sinners thus bewailing themſelves; *We have erred from the Way of Truth, and the Light of Juſtice hath not ſhined unto us, and the Sun of Underſtanding hath not riſen upon us.* Sap. ch.

v. xer. 6. If this is, and will be the Condition of Sinners how careful ought we to be not to walk in sinful Ways ! Of how great Importance is it to us, while we have Light, to walk as Children of Light, since our future and eternal Happiness depends upon it ! If we neglect this, and come thereby to lose our Souls, it will be entirely our own Fault, and to us, in this Case, the Words of the Prophet may be applied ; *Thy Perdition is of thyself, O Israel.* *Osea*, chap. xiii. ver. 9.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus, the true Light which enlightens every one coming into the World ! O bright Star of *Jacob* ! Sun of Justice who hast shined upon our World with thy beauteous Rays ! how infinitely am I obliged to thy Mercy for bringing me into this glorious Light, and freeing me from the Darknes of my corrupt Nature ! Dear Saviour of my Soul ! perfect what thou hast begun ; send thy Holy Spirit to reside and dwell in my Heart by Love. Illuminate my Understanding, sanctify my Soul, and cleanse it from all inordinate and vain Love of Creatures, or any Thing in this World ; water what is dry in me with the Dew of thy heavenly Grace ; wash and cleanse what is foul ; heal what is hurt ; bend what is stubborn ; warm what is cold ; correct what is wrong, and make me in all Things pleasing to thee.

O

O eternal Source of indeficient Light ! O blessed Light ! O desirable Light, come and illuminate me. O my God, vouchsafe to communicate thyself to me; kindle in my Breast the Flames of a most ardent Love of thee. Dear Lord, teach me, govern and protect me. Confirm and strengthen me in thy holy Service; may I constantly walk in the Paths of thy holy Commands; may I follow thee, O Christ, the true Light, till I come to enjoy thee in thy Kingdom of Heaven among the happy and blessed Children of Light, thy holy and glorified Saints, and with them praise and glorify thee for ever

S E P T E M B E R 21.

St. MATTHEW, Apostle and Evangelist.

THE historical Account of this Saint's being called to be one of Christ's Disciples, is given by himself in the ixth Chapter of his Gospel, where we are informed that Jesus passing by saw a Man sitting at the Custom-house whose Name was *Matthew*, and said to him, *Follow me*; who rising up immediately followed him. St. *Matthew* was the Son of *Alpheus*, and otherwise called *Levi*, by which Name the other Evangelist always mention him; but he, out of his great Humility, styles himself *Matthew* the Publican, or Receiver

ceiver of the Customs, which Office he exercised, till called by our Saviour he abandoned it to follow him, and in a grateful Return for the Favour, made a Feast for our blessed Lord, and invited to it a great many other Publicans, that they might have an Opportunity likewise of being converted. *Christ*, accepting the Invitation, the Pharisees took occasion to slander him, and asked his Disciples why he would eat with Publicans and Sinners? Our Saviour refuted their unjust Censures, and put them to silence by bidding them go, and learn what that meant, *I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice*. St. Matt. chap. ix. ver. 13. telling them likewise that he came, not to call the Just, but Sinners to Repentance.

St. *Matthew* having quitted his lucrative Employment of receiving the Customs, to follow Christ, was chosen by him to be one of the twelve Apostles. After the Ascension of our blessed Saviour, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost, when the Apostles separated to preach the Gospel, he travelled into *Ethiopia*, but first, at the Desire of the believing Jews, writ his Gospel in *Hebrew*, about the Year of Christ 39, according to the Opinion of some; others say, that he writ it by particular Desire of St. *Peter* and the other Apostles, who perhaps might desire him to comply with the Request which had been made to him by the Faithful. One Copy of this Gospel, and which St. *Bartholomew* carried with him into *India*,
was

was there found 190 Years afterwards by *Pantenus*, a celebrated Catechist of *Alexandria*. Another Copy was found with the Body of St. *Barnabas* the Apostle, lying upon his Breast, in the Year 485.

St. *Matthew* preached the Faith of Christ with great Success in the *Abyssine Ethiopia*, and confirmed the Doctrine he preached by many Miracles which he daily wrought; and, according to his Acts in the *Roman Breviary*, raised to Life the Daughter of the *Abyssine* Monarch, on which that Prince and his Queen embraced the Christian Faith, and while this royal Convert lived, the Apostle met with great Encouragement in preaching the Gospel, and persuaded *Iphigenia* the King's Daughter to consecrate her Virginity to God; but after her Father's Death, *Hirtacus* his Successor in the Throne, and a Heathen, earnestly desired to marry this Princess, but could not prevail upon her to give Consent; and being informed that St. *Matthew* was the Occasion of her Refusal, as having first persuaded her to a State of Virginity, and then encouraged her to persevere therein, was violently enraged against the Apostle, and ordered him immediately to be killed, which barbarous Order was accordingly fulfilled, and the holy Evangelist slain by having a Lance, or Halbert run thro' his Body while he was at the Altar celebrating the holy Mysteries; thus finishing his Apostolic Labours by a glorious Martyrdom, and is honoured by the

the Church as an Apostle, Evangelist and Martyr, on the 21st of September.

The GOSPEL. St. Matt. chap. ix. ver. 9.

And when Jesus passed on from thence, he saw a Man sitting in the Custom-house named *Matthew*; and he saith to him, Follow me. And he rose up, and followed him. 10. And it came to pass as he sitting at Meat in the House, behold many Publicans and Sinners came, and sat down with Jesus and his Disciples. 11. And the Pharisees seeing it, said to his Disciples, Why doth your Master eat with Publicans and Sinners? 12. But Jesus hearing it, said, They that are in Health, need not a Physician, but they who are sick. 13. Go then and learn what this meaneth, I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice. For I am not come to call the Just, but Sinners.

R E E L E C T I O N S.

Many are the comfortable and excellent Instructions contained in this holy Gospel, and wherein the Grace and Goodness of God does appear in an extraordinary and wonderful Manner. Our blessed Saviour passing by a Custom-house beheld St. *Matthew* sitting there in quality of a Publican or Toll-gatherer, an Office extremely odious to the Jews, and which rendered the Persons who exercised it very contemptible, and to be numbered with, and
joined

joined to Sinners. But with God there is no Exception of Persons, and Jesus Christ who came to call Sinners to Repentance, called St. *Matthew* from that State to follow him, who immediately obey'd, leaving this lucrative Employment, and from that Moment constantly attended on the holy Jesus. Instructive Example of a true Conversion and ready Obedience! *Christ* says, *Follow me.* St. *Matthew* immediately rises, and follows him, tho' he had not seen any of our Lord's Miracles, nor had Jesus Christ done any Thing to convince him that he ought to quit his Employment, and abandoning the Means of acquiring Riches; and yet without Delay, or standing upon Terms, he abandoned all to become Christ's Disciple. How powerful and efficacious was this Call, which was answered by an Obedience so prompt and ready! From hence, Christians, we are to learn that when God calls us by the secret Inspirations of his holy Grace, we ought immediately to obey, nor make any Excuses to delay, or put off our Compliance, lest we lose the Happiness designed for us, like the young Man in the Gospel, who called by our Saviour, desired Leave first to go and bury his Father. Nothing is more pleasing to God, than a prompt Obedience; he calls upon us by his Grace, by his holy Word, by his Ministers speaking to us in his Name; and do we hearken to him? do we obey when thus called? does not the World, and its Pleasures or Profits hinder and
keep

keep us back? do we not in many Occasions, prefer little temporal Satisfactions and Conveniences before our Duty to God, and what he calls us to? This deserves Consideration, for how can we pretend to be Disciples of Jesus Christ, or to be owned as such by him, if we refuse to follow him in the Way of the Gospel-Precepts and Commands? He says to every one, *Follow me*, in the Paths of Humility, Meekness and Patience, and in this Road he has walked before us, setting us an Example that we should tread in his Steps. But do those Christians follow him, who scorning to walk in the Paths of Humility, run on in the dangerous and destructive Ways of Pride and Ambition, and with whom nothing can relish but what favours of Pomp and Shew, Grandeur and Magnificence. Are those to be esteemed Disciples of the meek and holy Jesus who abandon themselves on all Occasions to Anger and Passion, Fretfulness and Impatience? Jesus Christ called St. *Matthew* and his other Disciples to a poor and laborious Life, a Life of Hardships and Sufferings, and can we pretend in these their Festivals to revere and honour them in their Sufferings and Labours, and yet not care to follow their Example? Alas! is it not plain that the Generality of Christians live as if they had embraced another Gospel than what Jesus Christ has taught, and had found another Way to Heaven than what he has told us. Thus the World, the Flesh, and the Devil endeavour to deceive us with
false

false Notions, and to make us walk in the broad, and seemingly pleasant Way of Sin, which nevertheless leads to certain Death and everlasting Misery. It is from these dangerous Ways God calls us, and if we desire to be safe, and to secure our eternal Salvation, we must hearken to, and obey his Calls. Like St. *Matthew*, we must rise immediately and quit all Occasions of Sin, all dangerous and sinful Employments, however lucrative, or agreeable they may be.

Another useful and profitable Instruction presents itself from the Gospel of this Feast. St. *Matthew* having quitted his Employment to follow Christ, made an Entertainment for him, and invited several other Publicans and Sinners, who came and sat at Table with our blessed Saviour. Here we may consider the Gratitude of St. *Matthew*, desirous to make some Acknowledgment to him who had called him to be his Disciple. and we may likewise observe his Charity and Zeal for the Salvation of others. True Charity is communicative, and seeks not to keep the Good it receives to itself, but is desirous that others may partake of it. The Apostle invited several Publicans and Sinners, that having an Opportunity of seeing and hearing Jesus Christ, they might be converted also: and with this View our blessed Lord accepted St. *Matthew's* Entertainment, and sat down to eat with those Publicans and Sinners, that he might take occasion to instruct them. We may likewise observe that those

those Publicans and Sinners going to this Feast, and sitting at Table with Jesus Christ, were converted and did Penance, as Christ himself intimates, when he said that he came not to call the Just, but Sinners to Repentance. How great Reason have we here to admire the Bounty and Condescension of the holy Jesus! He came to seek and to save Sinners. He vouchsafed to eat and drink with them, and omitted nothing that might work upon them in order to gain them. He has the same Goodness and Mercy for us, and for all whom he daily calls upon. Happy those who hearken to and obey his Call, who rise up from the sad State of Sin, and follow him by a sincere Conversion. A due Sense of the Favour thus conferred upon a Sinner by God's Grace, will make him gratefully entertain Jesus by devout Acts of Praise and Thanksgiving, and such a true Penitent, such a happy Convert will endeavour to bring as many as he can to Jesus Christ, by labouring what he can for the Conversion of others. And this is one of the best Proofs which can be given of being sincerely converted. St. *Matthew*, of a Publican, became a great Saint, and a holy Apostle of Jesus. In like Manner a Sinner called by God, and answering the Call, becomes a good Christian himself, and an instructive Example to others.

The Scribes and Pharisees were offended at the Charity and Condescension of Christ sitting at Table with the Publicans and Sinners, and with Pride and Contempt said to his Disciples,

Why

Why does your Master eat with Publicans and Sinners? The holy Jesus prevented his Apostles from answering, and put those envious and pretended Zealots to Confusion, bidding them go, and learn the Meaning of those Words, *I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice.* Here is severely, but justly, reprehended all Pride and Self-Conceit, all Contempt of others, all rash Judgments and censuring our Neighbour; all condemning others from Hearsay, Suspicion, or meer outward Appearances, as contrary to that charitable and benevolent Disposition which makes a great and shining Part of the true Christian's Character. As Mercy is the darling Attribute of God, and which he himself says he delights to shew to the Sons of Men, we ought to be merciful and benevolent to one another. Hence our blessed Saviour says to his Disciples and Followers, *Be you merciful as your Father in Heaven is merciful.* St. Luke, chap. vi. ver. 36. And we may observe, *Christ* does not say only, Be merciful, but he also expresses the Manner how we are to be so. As our Father in Heaven is merciful. We must therefore in the Practice of this Virtue behave to one another as God does towards us. His Conduct must be the Rule of ours; but we totally deviate from this Rule, when, like the Pharisees, we take upon ourselves to censure, judge, and condemn our Neighbour; and we should do well to remember what *Christ* has said, *With what Measure you*

you mete it sha'l be measured to you again. St.
Matt. chap. vii ver. 2.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

Adorable Jesus ! when I behold a Publican called to be an Apostle, how admirable and how powerful does thy Grace appear ! When I see a Multitude of Publicans and Sinners received by thee with so much Bounty and Condescension, how does it inspire me with a Confidence in thy Mercy. I behold thee, O thou true and only Physician of Souls ! sitting at Table with Sinners, graciously healing the Diseases of their Souls by converting them ; have the same Pity and Compassion for me, O Lord, for I am equally sick. I stand equally in need of thee. Let me then find the same Compassion, and experience the same Bounty in the Cure of my Evils, the Pardon of my Sins.

Thou hast declared, O Jesus, that thou didst come to call, not the Just, but Sinners to Repentance. Call me then, O Saviour of the World, for I am a Sinner. Speak to my Soul that I may hear and obey. Make me to know and understand the sad Evil of Sin, and give me a sincere Desire of being healed. Grant that with a firm Faith and an humble Confidence I may have recourse to thee, and willingly embrace that Penance to which thou dost call Sinners. Then shall I obtain true Health

O

to

to my Soul, and become pleasing and acceptable to thee.

And, you, O holy St. *Matthew*, glorious Evangelist of the Gospel of Christ, help me with your Prayers, and intercede in my Behalf, that I may obey the divine Calls and follow my Saviour as you did, and continue faithful to him to the last Moment of my Life.

S E P T E M B E R. 29.

St. MICHAEL, Archangel.

ON this Day the Church celebrates a Festival in Honour of St. *Michael* the Archangel, and all the holy Angels; and calls upon us to contemplate the Excellency of those blessed Spirits, and to praise God for the many Blessings conferred upon us by their Ministry. As for the Creation of the Angels, when, and at what Time they were made, tho' *Moses* does not speak clearly and distinctly of it in his Account of the Creation of the World, it is the general Opinion of the Fathers that they were made before this World, and seems strongly confirmed by that Passage of Scripture, where God speaking to *Job*, says, *Where wast thou---when the Morning Stars praised me together, and all the Sons of God made a joyful Melody?* Job, chap. xxxviii. ver. 7. By the Sons of God is here understood, according to the

the best Interpreters, the Angels rejoicing at the Creation of this World especially of Man. As for the Nature of the holy Angels, they are pure Spirits, free from all Matter, intelligent, active, incorruptible Beings. The Number of them is not known. The Prophet *Daniel*, chap. vii. ver 10. speaks of Millions, but we may observe there a definite tho' great Number to be put for an indefinite. Nor is it less difficult to ascertain positively their different Ranks and Employments. The general Opinion is that they are divided into three different Hierarchies, each containing three different Orders, and are stiled the nine Choirs of Ange's. This Division is observed by St. *Gregory the Great*. *Hom. 30. in Evang.* who says, the Name of Angel denotes their Office, not their Nature by which they are always Spirits, and to be considered as such; but are then only called Angels when any Ministry is performed by them in regard of Man. The same holy Father says, that when any Message of smaller Importance is to be delivered, they are called Angels who carry it, but in Affairs of Moment and great Importance the Archangels are employed. Hence, not any Angel but *Gabriel* the Archangel, was sent to *Zacharias*, to declare to him that his Wife *Elizabeth* should conceive and bring forth a Son, who was designed to be the Precursor of the promised *Messias*. The same Archangel was sent to the blessed Virgin *Mary* to denounce to her the Mystery of the Incarnation, and

that she should conceive in her Womb and bring forth the Son of God. St. *Luke*, chap. i. ver. 31.

In the first Hierarchy of the holy Angels are placed the three different Orders of Seraphims, Cherubims, and Thrones. Of the Seraphims mention is made by the Prophet *Isaias*, chap. vi. ver. 2. in a Vision he had the Year before King *Ozias* died, wherein he beheld the Lord of Hosts sitting upon a Throne, and the Seraphims standing round it. The Cherubims are spoken of in the Book of *Genesis*, ch. iii. ver. 24. when after the Fall of *Adam* and *Eve*, and their being turned out of Paradise, God placed a Cherub with a flaming Sword to guard the Passage which led to the Tree of Life. The Thrones are mentioned by St. *Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Colossians*, chap. i. ver. 16.

In the second Hierarchy are numbered the Dominations, Principalities and Powers. These three Orders of blessed Spirits are named in the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, chap. i. ver. 21. and in that to the *Colossians*, chap. i. ver. 16. The third Hierarchy or Choir contains the Virtues, Archangels and Angels. St. *Paul* mentions the Virtues likewise, in his Epistle to the *Colossians*. The Archangels and Angels are frequently spoke of in the sacred Oracles. As for St. *Michael*, he is stiled the Prince of the heavenly Host, and was at the Head of those faithful Angels who opposed themselves against *Lucifer* in his Rebellion against God.

Of

Of the Combat he had with and Victory over the Dragon and his Angels, who were thereupon cast out of Heaven, St. *John* makes mention in his *Apocalyps*, or Book of *Revelations*, chap. xii. ver. 7.

The just Honour which the Church pays to St. *Michael* and the holy Angels, is of no modern Date, but very ancient, and of a quite different Nature from that Worship of Angels which St. *Paul* speaks of, and cautions the Faithful against. *Coll.* chap. ii. ver. 18. and which was set on foot by *Simon Magus*, and continued by *Cerint'us* the *Heresiarch*, and his Followers, who maintained the Worship of Angels to be absolutely necessary to approach to God, who they said, without their Ministry was inaccessible to us, and as a just Acknowledgment of the Law given by their Ministry to the Jews, to the Observance of which, these Heretics pretended we were obliged. In Opposition to this false and pernicious Doctrine, St. *Paul* writing to the *Colossians*, says, *Let no Man seduce you, willing in Humility and Worship of Angels.* Ep. ad *Col.* chap. ii. ver. 18. This Heresy continued in some Churches of *Asia* to the fourth Age, and was condemned in the Council of *Laodicea*, but has no Connexion with that Honour and Veneration which the Church always paid to Saints and Angels. We are informed by the Historians *Theodoret* and *Sozomene*, that in their Time there was a celebrated Church one or two Leagues distant from *Constantinop'le*, which

was called *Michaelium*, or the Church of St. *Michael*, wherein St. *Michael* often appeared, and cured those Sick who went to it, and *Sczomone* says, that he himself experienced the Assistance of this Archangel, in Honour of whom the Emperor *Justinian* built six Churches, as *Procopius* affirms, according to that learned and elaborate Writer *F. Thomafine Traité des Fêtes, Lib. C. 22.* Thus was St. *Michael* honoured in the East, nor was the Devotion of the Western Churches to him any Ways inferior. In the Time of Pope *Gelasius* was a singular Apparition of St. *Michael*, on the Top of Mount *Garganus*, in the Year 493, which the Church annually celebrates on the 8th of *May*. In the Council of *Mayenne*, 813, mention is made of the Feast of St. *Michael*, under the Title of the Dedication of St. *Michael*. In the Sacramentary of St. *Gregory* the Great we find the Feast of St. *Michael*, with the Prayers or Collects that are now used in the Mass. Pope *Boniface III.* who died in the Year 607, dedicated a Church to St. *Michael*, at *Rome*, in the chief *Circus*, near *Adrian's Tower*, on the 29th of *September*, since when, that Day has been observed as a Festival in Honour of St. *Michael* and all the holy Angels, and is called the Feast of the Dedication of St. *Michael* and all Angels.

The GOSPEL. St. Matthew, chap. xviii. ver. 1.

At that Time the Disciples came to Jesus, saying: Who, thinkest thou, is the greater in the Kingdom of Heaven? 2. And Jesus calling unto him a little Child, set him in the Midst of them. 3. And said: Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little Children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. 4. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little Child, he is the greater in the Kingdom of Heaven. 5. And he that shall receive one such little Child in my Name, receiveth me. 6. But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a Millstone should be hanged about his Neck, and that he should be drowned in the Depth of the Sea. 7. Woe to the World, because of Scandals, for it must needs be that Scandals come: but nevertheless, woe to that Man by whom the Scandal cometh. 8. And if thy Hand or thy Foot scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into Life maimed or Lame, than having two Hands or two Feet, to be cast into everlasting Fire. 9. And if thine Eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: It is better for thee having one Eye to enter into Life, than having two Eyes, to be cast into Hell-Fire. 10. See that you despise not one of these little ones: For I say

unto you, that their Angels in Heaven always see the Face of my Father who is in Heaven.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

On this Festival, according to the Intention of the Church, as also from the Words of our blessed Saviour in the Conclusion of this Gospel, we may find an excellent and instructive Subject to entertain and raise up our Devotion by considering the Happiness of those blessed Spirits who are continually in the Presence of God, assisting about his Throne as Ministers of his most holy Will, which they execute with Joy, Alacrity, and Fidelity, and in which it is our Duty to imitate them, as we are taught to say in the Lord's Prayer, *thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven*. In this Petition we beg Grace to do the holy Will of God in all Things here upon Earth, as it is done by those glorified Spirits in Heaven, whose Happiness is in seeing God, and in being ministering Spirits to do his Will. A Christian, therefore, is to account it not only his Duty, but a Happiness to do the Will of God in all Things upon Earth, as the certain Means of being, one Day, admitted into that Kingdom of Heaven, where the Angels always see the Face of God, that is, enjoy him, and are, and always will be happy in that Enjoyment; but without sincere and careful Endeavours to do the Will of God, by keeping his holy Commandments, vain are all Hopes of Heaven, and
of

of being happy with God who will for ever exclude from his Kingdom all wilful Sinners, who, by their Sins, rise in Rebellion against him, like *Lucifer* and his Angels, and with them must expect to be cast into the outer Darkness where is weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth for all Eternity. This deserves our Attention, and if we consider the Glory and Happiness of St. *Michael* and all the Angels to be the Recompence of their Fidelity to God, we must also be faithful to him in the Discharge of our Duty, that we may partake of their Happiness.

As a further Subject for our spiritual Entertainment on this Festival, we may consider the particular Properties of the different Hierarchies, or Orders of the holy Angels, and first of the *Cherubims* inflamed with the Love of God, and desirous of imparting the same to us. Let us then correspond with their Desires, and endeavour ardently to love him, who infinitely deserves to be loved for himself and his own adorable Perfections, and for his great Love to us. 2. The *Seraphims* excelling in Wisdom and the Knowledge of God, and communicating the same to the inferior Orders. 3. The *Thrones* so called for Purity, and in whom God reigns and resides, as in his Throne. 4. The *Dominations* exercising a Command given them, and directing the lower Angels. 5. The *Principalities* exhibiting in themselves, and causing others to give due Honour to God. 6. The *Powers*, as their Name signifies, en-

cowed with Power to keep under and curb the infernal Spirits. 7. The *Virtues* effecting a firm and unchangeable Adhesion to God in all Manner of Virtue. 8. The *Archangels* as the special Messengers of God in Matters of great Importance. 9. The *Angels* as ministring Spirits sent to minister for those who shall be Heirs of Salvation, as St. *Paul* expresses it in his Epistle to the *Hebrews* ch. i. ver. 14. In thus considering the several Properties of these blessed Spirits, we may admire the infinite Goodness of God who has deputed them for our Service, and has likewise appointed to every one of us an Angel Guardian to defend and protect us against our Enemies spiritual and temporal; to direct us in the Way of Virtue and Holiness, to intercede for us, and to carry up our Prayers to Heaven, to assist us at the Hour of Death, and to present our Souls before the Throne of God. When we consider all this seriously we shall find just Reason to cry out with the royal Psalmist, *Lord, what is Man, that thou art thus mindful of him? or the Son of Man that thou dost so regard him?* Psalm viii. ver. 5.

Another, and very important Point is on this Day to reflect upon the practical Use we ought to make of this Goodness of God, in appointing these blessed Angels to be ministring Spirits to us, and under him to preside over Kings, Princes, and States, as well as over particular Persons. What an Honour to have these blessed Spirits thus appointed to take care of us? That they do so, is clear from sacred Scripture.

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He has given, says the royal Psalmist, *his Angels charge over thee.* Psalm xc. ver. 11. How much Reverence, therefore ought we to have towards them, especially to our Guardian Angel? What Confidence may we not have in them? They are always present and behold us, and this Consideration may serve as a just Restraint upon us when moved to Evil; for shall we dare to do that in the Presence of our Angel Guardian, which we should be ashamed and afraid to do in the Presence of any Man? From the holy Angels being appointed our Guardians and Keepers, we may learn also to have a Confidence in them and not to fear our spiritual Enemies, nor have we any Reason to fear, being, as we are, under such powerful Protectors who are charged to keep us in all our Ways, and will do so if we adhere to, and follow them, by endeavouring to imitate their Purity and Diligence in the Service of God. Let us daily therefore commend ourselves to their Protection, and as often as we perceive any grievous Temptation assault us, in all imminent Dangers, call upon our Guardian Angel for Help, and we shall find the Benefit of his Assistance. If we seriously reflect upon the many Dangers we are daily exposed to, we should not omit every Morning to invoke his Assistance, and the same at Night against all nocturnal Attacks of our ghostly Enemies. By this Devotion and other Exercises of a pious Life we may hope to share in the Glory of the
blessed

bleſſed Ange's, and with them ſee and glorify God for ever.

ASPIRATIONS.

O my infinitely good and gracious Lord God ! how much am I bound to praiſe thy Bounty and Goodneſs ? thou haſt created theſe pure Spirits to be the Miniſters of thy holy Will in our Regard, and of thy providential Care over us. O, that I could make thee ſome juſt Return for the Favour by loving thee with the ſame Ardour of divine Love which they do ! O, that I was as prompt and ready to obey thy Commands as they always are ! Give me thy Grace to do thy holy Will on Earth, as it is in Heaven. O my great and ſovereign Lord ! I deſire to ſubmit to, and execute thy Orders with the ſame Alacrity and Fidelity. I deſire continually to render to thee the ſame Adorations, Praiſes, and Thankſgivings, which they conſtantly pay unto thee.

O holy St. *Michael* ! all ye Archangels and Angels ! all you bleſſed Spirits of Heaven, pray for me, defend me againſt all the Attacks and Assaults of my Enemies. Conduct me through all the difficult and dangerous Paths of this World, and bring me at length to the eternal Happineſs of Heaven.

O holy *Angel*, Guardian of my Soul and Body ! to whoſe Care I am committed by the divine Clemency. I give you Thanks for all the Care you have hitherto taken of me. I commend

commend myself to your future Protection. Preserve me from all Dangers, direct me going, correct me erring, and reduce me wandering. Never leave me to myself, and under thy Direction may I safely arrive at the wished for Port of everlasting Bliss.

O C T O B E R 2.

Feast of the Guardian Angels.

THIS Feast used to be included in the Feast of St. *Michael* and all the Angels, on the 29th of *September*, and to be jointly kept with it. But *Ferdinand*, Archduke of *Austria*, afterwards Emperor, obtained of Pope *Paul V.* a Bull, given *September 27. 1608*, by which it was permitted to celebrate the Festival, and to make the Office of the Angels Guardians in particular, on the first Day that should not be hindered by any other Feast after the 29th of *September*. It was fixed as it is at present, to the 2d of *October*, by Pope *Clement X.* who declared its Office to be of Precept, and to be numbered among the greater Doubles.

That we have every one of us a Guardian Angel, seems evident from Scripture, and a Belief of it is conformable to the Sentiments of the antient Fathers. Our Saviour, speaking of
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276 *Feast of the Guardian Angels.* Oct. 2.

little Children, St. *Matthew* ch. xviii. ver. 10. says, *their Angels always behold the Face of God.* And in the *Psalms*, we read that God has given his Angels Charge over us to keep us in all our Ways. The Assistance which these Guardian Angels give to the faithful is proportioned to their Necessities and the Designs of Providence in their Regard. The Angel who went along with the People of *Israel* at their Departure out of *Egypt*, was destined to conduct them into the Land of Promise. The Guardian Angel of every one is given to assist him in his Passage through the Desert of this World, and to lead him to the heavenly *Canaan*; and they likewise assist us in our temporal Concerns, as appears by the Angel's accompanying young *Tobias* in his Journey to *Media*.

The Gospel for this Feast is the same as on that of St. *Michael* and all Angels *September 29*, which with the moral Reflections are a fit Subject for the devout Christian's Entertainment this Day.

OCTOBER 18.

Saint LUKE Evangelist.

S AINT *Luke* was a Native of *Antioch*, converted there, probably by *St. Paul*, and afterwards his constant Companion. He was a Person who had very great Accomplishments in human Learning, particularly *Physic*, and the Apostle writing to the *Colossians*, gives him the Title of Physician, saying; *Luke the Physician saluteth you. Col. chap. iv. ver. 14.* He is said likewise to have been very skilful in Painting. *Nicephorus*, in his ecclesiastical History, mentions a Picture of the blessed Virgin done by *St. Luke*. He writ one of the four Gospels, which bears his Name, and which he addresses to *Theophilus* a Person of Distinction, who is thought to have been some Magistrate of *Antioch*, converted and baptized by the Evangelist. *St. Jerome* is of Opinion that this Gospel was writ in the Course of *St. Paul's* Travels through *Achaia* and *Bæotia*: In the Beginning of which he declares that he delivered nothing but what he learnt from those who had been conversant with *Jesus Christ* in the Flesh and were Eye-witnesses of what had passed from the Beginning in Relation to the Birth, Actions, Life, Sufferings and Death of our blessed Saviour. In this Gospel we may observe that *St. Luke* insists much upon what regards the
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priestly Office of Jesus Christ, on which Account the Antients, in accommodating the four symbolical Representations mentioned *Ezekiel* chap. i. ver. 10. to the four Evangelists, assign the Ox or Calf to *St. Luke*. And it is of this Gospel of *St. Luke*, *St. Paul* is supposed to speak, when he says in his Epistles to the *Romans*, chap. ii. ver. 16. and in the second to *St. Timothy* chap. ii. ver. 8. *according to my Gospel*. *St. Luke* also writ the Acts of the Apostles, which he likewise dedicated to *Theophilus*, and therein gives an Account of the Transactions of the Apostles at *Jerusalem* and in *Judea*, for about twelve Years after *Christ's* Ascension, and then continues his History with the Travels and Preaching of *St. Paul* till he came to *Rome*, where he remained in Prison two Years; during which Time *St. Luke* constantly attended him to serve his Necessities, and supply those ministerial Offices which the Apostle in Prison could not perform, and in carrying Messages to those Churches where *St. Paul* had planted the Faith of Christ: And when the holy Doctor of the Gentiles was abandoned by all his Friends, *St. Luke* did not forsake him, but was his inseparable Companion and Attendant in all Dangers, of which the Apostle takes notice, and acknowledges in his 2d Epistle to *St. Timothy* chap. iv. ver. 11. *Luke only is with me*.

After the Martyrdom of *St. Paul* he returned into *Asia*, and there continued preaching the Gospel till the 84th Year of his Age,
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and then crowned all his Labours by laying down his Life as a faithful Martyr of that Gospel he had preached and published to the World. The *Roman Martyrology* mentions his dying in *Bithynia*; and *Niephorus*, giving an Account of his Martyrdom, says, that having successfully preached the Gospel, and converted great Numbers to the Christian Faith the Infidels seized him and hanged him on an Olive-tree. His sacred Body was, by the Command of *Constantine*, or his Son *Constantius*, afterwards solemnly removed to *Constantinople*, and deposited in the great Church there, built in Honour of the Apostles. And his Festival is celebrated *October 18*.

This holy Evangelist, in his Gospels, describes the humble and laborious Life of the Son of God upon Earth, and which we, as his Followers, ought to imitate by the Practice of Self-denial, Mortification, and carrying the Cross. In these Virtues consists the practical Duty of a Christian and Disciple of Jesus Christ. As the holy Apostles and Evangelists were illustrious Examples of these Virtues, on this Day we should earnestly beg the Grace of God, by the Intercession of *St. Luke*, that we may copy after the bright Example thus given to us.

The GOSPEL. St. Luke chap. x. ver. 1.

After these Things the Lord appointed other seventy two, and sent them two by two into every City and Place whither he himself was
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to come. 2. And he said to them; the Harvest indeed is great, but the Labourers few. Pray the Lord of the Harvest that he send Workmen into the Harvest. 3. Go: Behold I send you as Lambs among Wolves. 4. Do not carry a Purse, nor Scrip, nor Shoes, nor salute any one by the Way. Whatsoever House you shall enter into, first say: Peace be to this House: And if a Son of Peace be there, your Peace shall rest upon him, but if not, it shall return unto you. 7. And make your Abode in the same House, eating and drinking such as they have: For the Labourer is worthy of his Hire. 8. And into what City soever you shall enter, and they shall receive you, eat of the Things that are set before you. 9. And heal the infirm that are therein, and say to them: the Kingdom of God is come near unto you.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

The Instructions contained in this Gospel may seem chiefly, if not solely, to regard the Apostles and their Successors in the sacred Ministry; but if seriously considered, will be found to concern every Christian of whatever State or Condition he may be: And when our blessed Lord bids his Disciples to take neither Scrip nor Purse, he forbids them all undue worldly Solitude unbecoming their holy and sublime Function, and he does the same to all Christians, who in Quality of his Disciples and Followers,

Followers, are bound to observe what he says. Let this then be the Subject of our Reflections on this Festival, and from what we here read in this Gospel of St. *Luke*, learn to banish all immoderate worldly Care and Solitude from our Hearts.

We want not many powerful Motives, besides the Command of our divine Master to lay aside all over-anxious Cares and Solitude for the Things of this World. Motives which will clearly appear very strong by considering the Folly, the Sinfulness and Consequences of all undue Sollicitude and Anxiety. How great a Folly must it be for a Christian who knows himself created for Heaven and eternal Happiness, and that this is the one Thing necessary, truly and only deserving all his Care and Endeavours to secure it, yet to neglect it, and only busy himself about the Things of this World which can never make him truly happy nor content! to think of our Bodies and this World only, to the neglect of Heaven and our Souls, is a much greater Folly than a Man would be guilty of who should leave exposed his Jewels and Money to be taken by any one and only be careful to lock up and secure little Straws or Pepper-Corns. A Folly and Extravagance beyond what is to be found among the Inhabitants of *Bedlam*. This Folly will appear in a stronger Light when we consider how unprofitable it is, and to how little Purpose, since with all our Care and Solitude we cannot alter the Designs of Providence in our Regard,

gard, and only serves to procure us many severe and mortifying Disappointments by which God often and justly punishes us for trusting more to ourselves than to him. *Which of you, says Jesus Christ, by taking Thought, can add to his Stature one Cubit? St. Matt. chap. vi. ver. 27.* Away then with all superfluous Cares and Solitudes about this World, and the Things of it! Solitude, foolish and sinful likewise! Christians! hear further what your divine Master says: *Be not solicitous for your Life, what you shall eat, nor for your Body what you shall put on. Is not the Life more than the Meat; and the Body more than the Raiment? Behold the Birds of the Air, for they neither sow nor do they reap, nor gather into Barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more Value than they? Be not solicitous, therefore, saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these Things do the Heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of these Things. Seek ye, therefore, first the Kingdom of God, and his Justice, and all these Things shall be added unto you. St. Matt. chap. vi. ver. 25.*

After this plain Declaration of Jesus Christ, it must be highly sinful as well as foolish, in a Christian, to let all his Care and Solitude be about this World and the Things of it only, as it is a wilful Transgression of a positive Command to the contrary, and is more than dividing our Heart between God and the World, for it is giving our Hearts wholly
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to the World, and not to God, and impiously robbing him of what he only has a Right to. Christ says: *No Man can serve two Masters. You cannot serve God and Mammon.* St. Matthew chap. vi. ver. 24. But while we give ourselves to inordinate, undue Care and Solitude about the World, do we not evidently shew that though we would seem to serve God, yet we would also serve the World, or rather that we are Servants of the World, and not of God? Is not this sinful? Will not this displease and offend God, and what will be the Consequences? no other, but that we must expect God will reject us, and not acknowledge us to belong to him. Did we seriously consider this as we ought, we should not be so very anxious about the World and the Goods of it. Did we really love God, and is it our Interest as well as Duty to love him? we should trust and believe him when he promises to give us all Things necessary, if we will serve him, and chuse him for our Master? By serving and relying upon him we may make ourselves truly easy and content, even happy in this World, as well as secure our Happiness in the next. He who feeds the Birds of the Air, and cloaths the Lilies of the Field, will never abandon his Servants, nor let them want what he judges necessary for them, and he knows better what is fit for us than we do ourselves. Our corrupt Nature prompts us to think every Thing necessary which our inordinate Passions demand, and that we can't be
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happy unless we flow in Riches and Abundance, but Grace instructs us that *having Food and Raiment we ought to be content*. Whatever goes beyond this, with regard to the Circumstances of that State of Life Providence has placed us in, is unbecoming a Christian. If we were made only for this World, and the Enjoyments of it, then Care and Sollicitude to obtain them would be allowable; but made, as we are, and designed for Heaven and eternal Happinefs, this claims our first, our greatest Attention, and the less we incumber ourselves with unnecessary and superfluous Cares about the World, the more and better disposed we shall be to think of Heaven and our Souls, which we are too apt to neglect when our Minds are taken up with, and our Application is totally given to the Riches, Business and Pleasures of the World; for *we cannot serve God and Mammon*. And what will it profit a Man to gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? St. Matthew, chap. xvi. ver. 26. How carefully then ought we to avoid all undue wordly Sollicitude, so foolish in itself, so sinful, and attended by such fatal Consequences! If we will be solicitous, let us be wisely so, piously solicitous to gain Heaven and the everlasting Riches of that glorious Kingdom, truly deserving our utmost Care, and which will be a full Recompence for all our Pains.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O thou great and wise Creator and preserver of all Things! thou whose kind and tender

der Providence takest care of the smallest Birds of the Air ! shall I distrust thy Care of me, and give myself up to undue Anxieties, and sinful Sollicitude about this World ? O Lord ! by thy Grace preserve me from so great a Folly ; from such an unworthy Return to that Love and Bounty thou hast hitherto shewn for me, and let me not be so unjust, nor so ungrateful as to rob thee of my Heart to fix it upon the World, or the Riches and Pleasures of it.

My whole Confidence ought to be placed on thee, and in thee alone will I trust. Give me, O my God, /as to the Things of this World, what thou pleasest, little or much ; and whatever thou pleasest to bestow upon me, may I make a right Use of it, by improving it to thy Honour and Glory, my Neighbour's Good, and the Benefit of my own Soul. May I seek in the first Place thy heavenly Kingdom, and the Riches of it. May I there possess thee the never-fading Treasure of eternal Bliss ! Thou art all my Treasure, all my desired Riches. Thou art in Heaven, and there my Heart shall be also. I will love thee alone, I will serve thee only, and I hope, one Day happily to enjoy thee.

O holy St. *Luke* ! join your Prayers to mine, and intercede in my Behalf. Obtain for me Grace, that I may die to this World, and all Things in it, that I may live to God here and with him for ever hereafter.

O C T O B E R 28.

St. SIMON and St. JUDE, Apostles.

THE former of these Apostles was of *Cana in Galilee*, and chosen by Jesus Christ to be one of the twelve, and by St. *Matthew* is called *Simon the Cananean*, and is also stiled *Simon Zelotes*, or the Zealot. After the Ascension of our blessed Saviour he preached the Gospel in *Egypt*, *Mauritania*, and *Mesopotamia*, and if we may believe some of our own Authors, came into these Western Parts, as far as our Island of *Great-Britain*. After having converted great Multitudes, and undergone many great Hardships and Persecutions he finished his Apostolic Course by Crucifixion according to the *Greek Menologies*. Venerable *Bede*, *Ujuardus* and *Ado*, with the *Roman Martyrology* place his Martyrdom in *Persia*. This is what ecclesiastical History affords of certain concerning the Life and Death of this glorious Apostle. Nor have we much more recorded, that can be depended upon, of St. *Jude*, who was Brother of St. *James the Less*, and, according to the *Flesh*, related to Jesus Christ. This Apostle has left an Epistle which is Part of the Canon of sacred Scripture wherein he stiles himself the Servant of Jesus Christ, and Brother of St. *James*. He carried the Light of the Gospel into *Arabia*, *Syria*, and *Mesopotamia*.

S. S. SIMON and JUDE. Oct. 28. 287

mia. The *Greek Menologies* intimate that he was shot to Death by Arrows, but do not mention the Place where; but according to the *Roman Breviary* and the general Consent of the Writers of the *Latin Church*, he was martyred with St. *Simon* in *Persia*, and accordingly is commemorated on the same Day with him.

The Reason why we have so little Account certain of these and some others of the Apostles may be from their Actions and Deaths, not being recorded by any cotemporary Author or who lived in that Age. What has been delivered by later Writers is not altogether certain and indubitable. But though primitive History is silent as to many Actions and Passages of the Lives of the Apostles, yet from what is delivered, and from good Authority, we may learn their constant Fidelity to their divine Master, and with what Zeal and Fervour they propagated the Gospel of Christ. They were terrified by no Danger, nor discouraged by any Difficulties, and counted themselves happy in suffering for the Sake of Christ, and to seal with their Blood the divine Doctrine they taught

The GOSPEL. St. *John*, chap. xv. ver. 17.

These Things I command you, that you love one another. 18. If the World hate you, know ye that it hath hated me before you. 19. If you had been of the World, the World would love its own; but because

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you are not of the World, but I have chosen you out of the World, therefore the World hateth you. 20. Remember my Word that I said unto you: the Servant is not greater than his Master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my Word, they will keep yours also. 21. But all these Things they will do to you for my Name's Sake: because they knew not him who sent me. 22. If I had not come and spoken to them they would not have Sin; but now they have no Excuse for their Sin. 23. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. 24. If I had not done among them the Works that no other Man hath done, they would not have Sin, but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father. But that the Word may be fulfilled, which is written in their Law: They hated me without Cause.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

In our Reflections on this holy Gospel, we may observe in the first Place the excellent Precept which Christ here gives to his Apostles, and in them to all Christians. *These Things I command you, that you love one another.* Concerning which, we are also to take notice that he says in another Place: *By this shall all Men know that you are my Disciples, if you have Love one for another.* St. John, ch. xiii. ver 35. This confirms the great Commandment given
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of loving our Neighbour, and such all Christians are to esteem one another. The Love of our Neighbour is by our divine Master joined to the Love of God, and are the two great Commands on which all the rest depend; nor can they be separated. We must not think we can, or do love God, if we do not love our Neighbour. The beloved Disciple St. *John* puts this Question, 1 *Ep.* chap. iv. ver. 20. *He that loveth not his Brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?* As if he would have said: it is in vain to imagine the Love of God can be there, where the Love of our Neighbour is excluded. And the greatest and most certain Proof we can give that we love God, is to love our Neighbour, not in Words only and by saying we love him, but to shew it by Deeds in the Manner our blessed Saviour tells us we must love him, that is, as ourselves; not in a slight, cold and indifferent Manner, but with a sincere and ready Mind and Will to assist him to the utmost of our Power, if at any Time he stands in need of our Help and Assistance. If we truly love our Neighbour we shall be willing to do him all the good we can, both in regard of his Body and Soul, and in all our Transactions with others, strictly adhere to that great Rule of doing as we would be done by; hence, whatever we wish or would have done to, or for ourselves, that we must wish and do to our Neighbour: and whatever we would not have done to ourselves, that we must not do to another: By this we fulfil the

Command here given to love one another, and every Christian may be able to judge of himself how far he does or does not comply with his Duty in this Point. They certainly do not, who bear Malice and Hatred against their Neighbour, who wrong or injure him, who refuse to forgive Injuries, and who shut their Hearts and their Purses against the Necessities of the Poor, when it is in their Power to relieve them. Such Christians as these are no more than nominal ones, and will never be owned by Christ for his Disciples; for whatever such may pretend, the Love of God is not in them, and as they neither love God nor their Neighbour, will be rejected by him.

Another Instruction here given us is from what our blessed Lord says concerning the Jews, that if he had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of Sin, that is, of the Sin of Infidelity and rejecting him. But because they refused to acknowledge him as their *Messias*, notwithstanding the wonderful Works they saw him perform, and the admirable Discourses he made to them, he pronounced most severe Woes against them. Woe unto thee *Corosain*: Woe unto thee, *Bethsaida*. *It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment than for you.* St. Matthew, chap. xi. ver. 22. These Woes pronounced against the Jews ought to be an Example to us, and to strike Terror into wicked and sinful Christians. The Jews were favoured with the preaching of Jesus Christ, and daily saw

saw his divine Miracles, yet continued obstinate in their Unbelief, and would not own him nor be converted: Hence their Crimes became greater, and Christ assured them, the Heathens, as less culpable, should be less punished than they. If the Jews are thus threatened to be more severely punished than Heathens, what must wicked Christians expect, who, while they profess the pure and holy Religion of Christ, and pretend to believe his Gospel, live like Heathens, and worse than many of them. Many and very great are the Advantages which Christians enjoy. To be educated in the Catholic Faith and Knowledge of Christ, and to hear his Word often preached and yet to live wickedly; to reject his Calls and abuse his Mercies is a high Provocation, such a wilful Ingratitude as will draw upon all such a more severer and more terrible Punishment at the last Day than either Jews or Heathens shall undergo. For the latter know not Christ, and the former do not believe in him: while Christians both know, and say they believe in him, and yet dare to offend him by wilfully transgressing his positive Laws: Terrible will be the Condition of such, if not prevented by sincere Repentance and Amendment. Let us seriously reflect on this; if we do, our Reflections will be so many powerful Motives to make us careful that this be not our Case. May we always remember that we are Christians, and, as such, Disciples of Jesus Christ, and that the Precepts and Commands

of him our divine Master ought to be the only Rule of our Conduct.

After speaking of the Infidelity and Obstinacy of the Jews, Christ tells his Apostles, that if the Jews had minded and kept his Words, they would also regard theirs; but as they refused to hearken to what he said, they were not to wonder if they rejected also the preaching of them his Apostles, shewing thereby the Obstinacy of their Malice which nothing could work upon. What our Saviour here says to his Apostles may be a Comfort to the Ministers of the Gospel, when they preach the Word of God, but do not work upon hardened Sinners and Libertines, The Preacher does his Duty, and those who refuse to hearken to him are without Excuse, and must answer for it. Preaching the Word of God is an excellent Means of Salvation, and which he has appointed for our Benefit, as by that we come to the Knowledge of our Duty, and learn what we must do to obtain eternal Life; for it is from the Ministers of God, who are appointed to be the Guides of our Souls, that we are to receive the Instructions necessary to direct us in the Way to Bliss. How unhappy then are all those who despise or neglect their salutary Instructions, and whose nice Ears cannot bear to hear their Duty, or to be told what they ought to do! No Wonder, if such wander out of the true Way, and following the blind Guide of their own perverse Will, blind as they are themselves, fall into the Ditch of Libertinism

S. S. SIMON *and* JUDE. Oct. 28. 293

tinism and Irreligion, and thereby perish. Such, alas ! may be truly said, to frustrate all the gracious Designs of God, to make them eternally happy, and may come to see their Folly when it may be too late to retrieve it.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus, my divine Master ! O thou eternal Good, from whom alone is all Good ! how just and reasonable are thy Commands, and how much am I obliged to thee for the Sweetness and Bounty thou dost manifest to me ! Thou dost not propose to my Obedience a hard and difficult Law ; nor dost thou lay upon my Shoulders heavy and insupportable Burdens. Thy Law is a Law of Love, of that Love which makes all Things easy. Thy Yoke is truly sweet and thy Burden light. What is more sweet, easy and delightful than to love thee, the most amiable, most deserving and desirable of all Things ? What is more just and reasonable than to love my Neighbour, and to love him as myself ? In my Neighbour I behold thy Image and Likeness, to which we are all made : I see thy Goodness and Bounty to thy Creatures, and I will love every one for the Relation he bears to thee.

Adorable Saviour what will become of me, and how miserable shall I be, if I am not one of thy Disciples ? Nor can I be one but by loving my Neighbour as myself. Away then all Pretences of corrupt Nature and Self-love,

which prompt to Hatred and Revenge, to resent Injuries, and to return Evil for Evil. Not so thy pure and holy Law, O my divine Master ! from that I learn to love my Enemies, to return Good for Evil, to love those who hate me, and to do good to those who speak Evil of and persecute me. These are the sublime Doctrines thou teachest, and the excellent Lessons delivered in thy School. Give me Grace, dear Lord, carefully to study and faithfully to practise them, that I may make it appear that I am a Disciple of thine and belong to thee.

Holy Saint *Simon* and Saint *Jude*, I humbly beg your Prayers that I may, by your Intercession, obtain the Grace of God, to hear his holy Word and keep it ; that in all my Actions I may follow the Rules of the holy Gospel you preached, and live and die in the Profession of that holy Catholic Faith you taught.

NOVEEBER I.

The Feast of all Saints.

THE Design of this Festival is to honour God in all his Saints, and to praise him for the Wonders of his Grace manifested in their holy Lives and precious Deaths; and as some of them only have particular Days set apart for celebrating their Memories, they may on this Day be honoured altogether, and the Defects be repaired which may have been committed in observing their particular Feasts. Pope *Boniface IV.* instituted this Solemnity at *Rome*, when he dedicated the *Pantheon* to the Honour of God, under the Title of the Church of the blessed Virgin *Mary* and all the Martyrs. The *Pantheon* was a Temple of admirable Architecture, built by *Agrippa*, and dedicated by him to *Jupiter* the Avenger. *Joviu'tori*, in the Beginning of the Reign of *Augustus Cæsar*, who after the Battle of *Actium* and Overthrow of *Mark Anthony*, became sole Master of the *Roman Empire*. By a Law of the Emperor *Theodosius* the younger, all the heathen Temples which then remained were destroyed, and a Cross planted on their Ruins as a Token of the Victory which Christianity had gained over Idolatry and Paganism. The *Pantheon* had been destroyed with the rest, but that the Emperor *Honorius* who governed the

western Part of the Empire opposed the Execution of *Theodosius's* Law in its Regard, being desirous of preserving that stately Monument of Antiquity which was afterward consecrated to the Honour of the true God and all the Saints. Concerning which Dedication Cardinal *Baronius* relates from an antient Manuscript of this Church, that the Pope loaded twenty-eight Carts with the Relicks of holy Martyrs which he placed therein. *Baron. Not. in Mart. die 13 Maii.* The Memory of it is thus related in the *Roman Martyrology*:
 “ On the 3d of the Ides of *May*, the Dedic-
 “ tion of the Church of *St. Mary* and the
 “ holy Martyrs, which blessed *Boniface IV.*
 “ having purified the *Pantheon*, or antient
 “ Temple of all the Gods, dedicated to the
 “ Honour of the Virgin *Mary* and all the
 “ Martyrs, in the Time of *Phocas* the Em-
 “ peror.” From whence it appears that this Festival was then observed only at *Rome*. *Sigebert* in his Chronicle relates, that Pope *Gregory IV.* coming into *France* in the Year 835, the Emperor *Lewis Debonaire*, being exhorted to it by his Holiness, and with the Consent of all the Bishops, published an Edict by which the Festival of all the Saints was ordered to be celebrated in all *France* and *Germany* on the first Day of *November*, as it was observed at *Rome* by the Decree of Pope *Boniface*. The Abbot *Hildwin*, in the Year 863, numbers it among the greater Solemnities of the Year, and which soon became as now, celebrated in all
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Parts of the Western Church. Pope *Sixtus IV.* Anno 1480, ordained it should be kept with an Octave. See *Gavant Com. in Rub. Sect 7.* chap. 13. Father *Thomasin* Treatise on the Feasts, L. 2. chap. 21.

The GOSPEL. St. *Matt.* chap. v. ver. 1.

And seeing the Multitudes, he went up to a Mountain, and when he was set down his Disciples came unto him. 2. And opening his Mouth he taught them, saying: 3. Blessed are the Poor in Spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. 4. Blessed are the Meek; for they shall possess the Land. 5. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. 6. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Justice: for they shall be filled. 7. Blessed are the Merciful: for they shall obtain Mercy. 8. Blessed are the clean of Heart: for they shall see God. 9. Blessed are the Peace-makers: for they shall be called the Children of God. 10. Blessed are they that suffer Persecution for Justice sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. 11. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my Sake. 12. Be glad and rejoice, for your Reward is very great in Heaven. For so they persecuted the Prophets that were before you.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

This Gospel is taken from the Beginning of our blessed Saviour's admirable and divine Sermon on the Mount : In the first Part of which he speaks of the eight Beatitudes, or those Virtues, the Observers of which he styles blessed or happy. As Christ came into the World, not only to redeem Mankind, but also to found a nobler and more perfect Institute than the Law given to *Moses*, he gives to his Apostles, and in them to all Christians, those pure and sublime Precepts by which we are taught to serve God in Spirit and in Truth, and may attain the highest Degree of Perfection. He begins with recommending Poverty of Spirit which takes off our Affections from an inordinate Love of, and a too eager Pursuit of Riches and Honours ; and teaches us to be content with whatever Station we are in and with what he shall please to bestow upon us. Thus in the midst of Riches, and while possessed of a large and affluent Fortune, we may be poor in Spirit by using those Riches for the End they are given us, to promote the Glory of God, and to relieve our indigent Neighbours, and to be content to be deprived of them whenever he shall please to take them from us. If we are poor and obliged to labour hard for our Subsistence, to shew a Poverty of Spirit by patiently submitting to the Order of his Providence, and thereby sanctify our outward Poverty,

verty, and gain the Kingdom of Heaven. He pronounces the Meek blessed, and promises they shall possess the Land of their own Hearts here, by being Masters of, not Slaves to their Passions; and the true Land of Promise, Heaven, hereafter. To all that mourn with true Sorrow for their own Sins and those of others. and for the Miseries and Calamities of this Life, he says, they shall be comforted in that happy Place, where all Tears shall be wiped away: And to those who hunger and thirst after Justice or Righteousness, who daily endeavour and seriously labour to love God more and more, and to advance in Virtue, he assures them they shall be filled with the Graces of his holy Spirit in this World, and with Glory in the next. As a short and sure Way to obtain Mercy, he pronounces the merciful blessed, for they shall obtain Mercy. Blessed likewise are the clean of Heart, for they shall see God, and none but those whose Hearts are not defiled by Impurities and the sordid Filth of Sin, shall ever enjoy the beatifick Vision of God; his holy Spirit having declared that he will not dwell in a Body subject to Sin, *Wis. chap. 1. ver. 4.* and that nothing unclean and defiled shall enter into Heaven. *Apoc. chap. xxi. ver. 27.* He gives to Peace-Makers the glorious Title of the Children of God, as he himself is called by the Prophet *Isaias* the *Prince of Peace*, and desires that whoever would belong to him should be a Child and Lover of Peace, studiously endeavouring to keep Peace
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with themselves, and with their Neighbours. Finally, he pronounces them blessed who suffer Persecution for Justice sake, and assures them their Reward shall be great in the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus is he graciously pleased to annex to his Precepts the most encouraging and glorious Rewards. What an Encouragement this, when our Duty and our Interest are so blended together, as not to be separated, and when by performing one, we effectually secure the other !

This the holy Saints did while upon Earth, and now happily reign with God in Heaven, and while we celebrate their Festivals and revere their Memory, we may consider how exactly they observed these excellent Precepts delivered by our blessed Saviour, and ought to look upon them as so many admirable Patterns for us to imitate : And for our Encouragement we may observe that, as with God there is no Exception of Persons, so neither is there any State or Condition wherein we cannot serve him and become even Saints ourselves ; for the most perfect Christians are those who endeavour to acquit themselves perfectly of the Duties of that particular State God has placed them in. In the Church's Calendar of Saints, among those whose Names have been written in the Book of Life, and who now enjoy God in Glory, are great Numbers of all Ranks and Degrees of both Sexes ; and of all States and Conditions, so that we are not only to consider them as excellent Patterns in general, but may also find particular Examples to-



to follow according to every ones particular State of Life. Kings and Princes may behold those who were Monarchs upon Earth, and yet knew how to reconcile the Grandeur of a Crown with their Duty to God, and from an earthly Throne mounted to a heavenly one. Noblemen, Courtiers, Generals, Officers and Soldiers may find those who have shewn the Example, and proved that the Court and Coronet, the Camp and a Sword do not of themselves exclude from Heaven. Gentlemen, Merchants, Tradesmen and Artificers may see Numbers of Saints who were in their Station upon Earth, and are now happy with God. The hired Servant, the working Man and poor Labourer may learn from many instructive Examples, that a poor and laborious Life does not hinder such from becoming great Saints. It depends upon ourselves assisted by the Grace of God, to live as the Saints did, and thereby to be Saints likewise. They were holy and irreprehensible in their Lives and Conversations. They were humble of Heart and despised the World, and were ambitious of nothing but to please God. They were poor of Spirit in the midst of Riches and Abundance; and many of them renounced all they had in the World to serve God in voluntary Poverty. They fasted, prayed, gave Alms. All this we may do, according to our Circumstances and Ability. They lived in the World, but not to the World, nor according to its vain and sinful Maxims. The holy Gospel was their Rule;

Rule; according to that they governed themselves, and being found faithful Servants, happily entered into the Joy of their Lord. So shall we too, if we do as they did. We have the same Helps, the same Encouragement as they had, and only want the same Constancy and Fidelity. And if we are faithful like them, we shall be happy with them. The Promise is made to every one: *Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.* *Apoc.* chap. ii. ver. 10.

We may likewise consider on this Festival the great Happiness the Saints enjoy in Heaven as the Recompence of their Sufferings, the Reward of their pious Labours upon Earth, and for having served God with Zeal and Fervour. To consider this Happiness will be a very great Encouragement and a powerful Inducement to imitate their Zeal and Fervour, that we may partake of their Glory and Bliss. As God threatens severe Punishments to the Wicked, he promises great and glorious Rewards to the Just, to all pious and good Christians, which he will bestow upon them in the Possession of that Kingdom which shall never end. These Rewards are so great and so inestimable, that St. Paul speaking of them says: *Eye hath not seen nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man, what Things God has prepared for them that love him,* 1 Cor. chap. ii. ver. 9. So great is the Bliss and Happiness of Heaven, that all we can possibly conceive charming and delightful, great
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and glorious falls infinitely short of it. It exceeds the utmost Stretch of Human Capacity, nor can we form any just or adequate Notion of it. There is the Possession of all Good, and the Privation of all Evil. There is eternal Security, and a secure Eternity. There we shall desire nothing which we shall not have, nor love any Thing which we shall not possess. There we shall see God, and enjoy him for ever. There we shall see the sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ, the blessed Virgin and all the glorious Saints, and for ever rejoice in their happy Society. How glorious must this Kingdom be where all the Saints for ever reign with Christ! The holy Patriarchs and Prophets behold him whom they so earnestly desired, and whose coming in the Flesh they foretold. They now see and enjoy the desired of all Nations, the holy One of *Israel*, and share in the Glory of his Kingdom. The holy Apostles and Evangelists who left all to follow Christ, and carried his Name into all Parts of the Earth, and sealed with their Blood the Doctrine they taught, reap the happy Fruit of their Labours. The holy Martyrs whose Courage was invincible, and whose Constancy no Torments could move, who generously chose to suffer Racks, Wheels, Fire, and all that the cruel Power of Persecutors could inflict, rather than deny their Faith, gloriously triumph over all the Rage and Malice of their Enemies, and with Crowns on their Heads and Palms in their Hands sing eternal Hymns of Jubilee and Exultation. The
holy

holy Confessors whose Lives upon Earth were so many shining Lights and bright Examples to others, enjoy the full Recompence of their Zeal and Fervour in the Service of God. The pure and holy Virgins whose unspotted Chastity consecrated here to God made them worthy Spouses of that heavenly Bridegroom, enjoy with him the chaste and pure Delights of an eternal Marriage Feast. All those holy Men and Women who here lived to God, and according to his holy Law, and who like faithful Servants endeavoured in all Things to do the Will of him their divine Master, find the happy Effects of so doing. What an Encouragement is this to love and serve God for a few Years here, in order to be thus happy with him for ever ! And we shall be so, if, like the Saints, we truly love and serve God. We need not fear there is a Place in Heaven for us, and the Happiness which the Saints enjoy, we may, and shall possess ; it is designed likewise for us, nor shall we be deprived of it, if we are not wanting to do what is required to obtain it.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

My God ! when I consider the Wonders of thy Grace so conspicuous in thy holy Saints and Servants, how great Reason have I to praise and glorify thy holy Name ! I give thee Thanks for the Graces thou didst bestow on them while they were upon Earth ; and for the
Glory

Glory and Happiness with which thou hast crowned them in Heaven. That Happiness thou dost mercifully design for me, thou proposest it by way of Encouragement, and wilt most assuredly bestow it upon me, if through my own Fault I do not deprive myself of it.

Yes, O my merciful and infinitely good God! It will be my own Fault if I am not happy, and I deserve to be for ever miserable if I do not make a right Use of thy Grace, and the favourable Opportunities thou affordest me. What couldst thou have done more for me than what thou hast done? Thou hast opened the Store-house of thy Mercies, and poured forth thy Favours upon me with a liberal Hand. Thou promist me a glorious Recompence, an eternal Kingdom if I love and serve thee faithfully, and in thy holy Saints thou givest me so many Guides who, by their Example, may direct me to thee. Let not all this Love, dear Lord, be lost; perfect what thou hast begun in me; bring me to the Joys of thy heavenly Kingdom, that with thy Saints I may love and possess thee for ever.

O all you holy and happy Saints of God, who having passed over the tempestuous Sea of this World, are now arrived at the Port of everlasting Bliss! You are secure of your own Happiness, and are kindly solicitous for ours. I praise our common Lord for the Glory conferred upon you, and humbly implore your powerful Intercession. Pray for me a poor Sinner. Obtain for me the Pardon

don of my Sins, and Grace that I may, like you, love and serve God in this World, and with you be happy in the next.

NOVEMBER 2.

All Souls.

THE Custom of praying for the Dead, and offering up the holy Sacrifice in their Behalf, has been observed by the Catholic Church in all Ages, as is apparent from the Writings of the primitive Fathers, and the most antient Liturgies. *Tertullian* speaks of it, *de cor. mil.* C. 3. *S. Cyrtian Lib.* 1. *Ep.* 9. *S. Gregory Nazianzen* in his Funeral Oration for his Brother *Casarius*, *Orat* 10. *S. Augustin.* *Euchir.* C. 109, 110. *Lib. de cura pro mort.* C 1. 4. It was Part of *Aerius's* Heresy in the fourth Century, according to *S. Epiphanius*, that the Prayers and Alms of the Living did not profit the Dead. *Her.* 75. §. 3. *S. Epiphanius* also declares that we mention the Saints and other faithful departed in a quite different Manner: the Saints, that we may give a singular Honour to Christ, and others, that we may obtain Mercy for them, *ibid* § 8. This Practice of praying for the faithful departed, is also recommended in holy Scripture, and in the second Book of *Maccabees*, it is expressly affirmed

firmed to be a wholesome and holy Cogitation to pray for the Dead, that they may be loosed from their Sins. 2 *Mac.* chap. xii. ver. 46. And though Protestants will not admit these Books as Part of Scripture, yet St. *Augustin* says, the Catholic Church allowed and received them as such. *de Civit. Dei. Lib.* 18. *Cap.* 36. And it must seem surprizing that any should reject and condemn a Practice so antient, so universal, and so well grounded.

The Institution of the second of *November*, or the Day after the Feast of all Saints, for this general Commemoration of the faithful departed, is commonly and by most Writers attributed to *Odilo* the venerable Abbot of *Cluny*, who ordained it to be observed in his Monastery, *Anno* 998, which Custom being from thence observed in several other Monasteries and Churches, soon after became universal, and confirmed by the Apostolic See. It is the judicious Remark of a learned Writer, that several Festivals of the Church had their Rise from the particular Devotion of certain Monasteries and religious Orders, which were, on being found just and reasonable, adopted and confirmed by the supreme Authority of the Church, and rendered universal. *Thomassine, traité des festes, Lib.* 2. C. 2. the same Author observes that before the Time of *Odilo*, the Antiphonaries of the Church or Office-Books contained an Office for the Dead, but was recited only for every particular Person after their Decease. *Amalarius*, who lived
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about the Year 800, speaks of an Office of the dead which he had composed, and gives a Reason for it. "After the Office of the Saints," says he, I have inserted an Office for the dead; there being many who go out of this World, who are not immediately joined to the Saints, for whom, according to Custom, an Office is recited." *Martinus Polonus*, according to *Gavant, Com. in Rub. §. 7. C. 13.* makes Pope *Boniface IV.* to be the Institutor of this Solemnity, in the Year 607; and another Writer *Petrus Gelasius* ascribes it to *John XVI.* at the Request and by the Persuasion of Abbot *Odilo*. These seeming Differences may be easily reconciled, by admitting the Practice in the Church to pray for the dead; which granted, we may suppose that in some Churches and Monasteries they observed this Custom of commemorating all the Faithful departed on the Day after all Saints, and which became more universal after the Time of *Odilo*, and at length came to be observed in all Churches as it is at this Time.

The Reasonableness and Piety of this Devotion is a sufficient Recommendation of it, tho' the particular Institution of it had been of a much later Date; and the Authority of the Church is more than sufficient to answer any Objection which can be made against it. This Authority of the Church, in these Sorts of Observations, had so great a Weight with *St. Augustin*, that he believed *that* alone to be a good Reason for praying for the dead, though the
Scripture

Scripture had not mentioned it, as it does in the Book of *Maccabees* ch. 12. ver. 46. What this great Saint and Doctor says, is an unanswerable Reply to all the little Cavils of the Enemies of this pious and Catholic Devotion. " In the Book of the *Maccabees* says he, we " read of Sacrifices offered for the dead ; but " although it had never been read in the old " Scripture, the Authority of the universal " Church, in this Case, is not small, where " in the Prayers of the Priest which are poured " forth to the Lord God at his Altar, the " Commendation of the dead has also its " Place." St. *Augustin*, *Lib. de cura pro mort.* ch. 1. Thus reasonable as well as lawful did this holy Father esteem it to pray for the dead. Let us then, this Day, join with the Church in her solemn Office, and devoutly pray for the Souls departed and detained in a suffering State, and beg of God that he would accept the Prayers and Suffrages of the Church in their Behalf. By thus praying for the dead, we shew our Love of God and our Neighbour, and exercise a useful Charity to ourselves. We shew our Love of God by praying for the Delivery of those suffering Souls, that he may be praised and glorified by them in Heaven. We shew our Love of our Neighbour in pitying their Sufferings, and praying for their Relief: And to pray for the dead is a useful Act of Charity to ourselves, by putting us in mind of the next World, to think of which, and to prepare for it, is the great

great Duty of Christians. By it we likewise provide ourselves Friends and Intercessors in Heaven, and are rendered more capable of Relief when we ourselves shall come to be in that suffering State.

The GOSPEL. St. *John*, chap. v. ver. 25.

Amen, amen I say unto you, that the Hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. 26. For as the Father hath Life in himself; so he hath given to the Son also to have Life in himself. 27. And he hath given him Power to do Judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28. Wonder not at this, for the Hour cometh wherein all that are in the Graves shall hear the Voice of the Son of God. 29. And they that have done good Things, shall come forth unto the Resurrection of Life; but they that have done evil, unto the Resurrection of Judgment.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

That we must die, is a Truth not to be called in Question. The sacred Oracles affirm it, and daily Experience demonstrates it. We must die, that is, our Souls must sooner or later be separated from our Bodies, which then will be laid in the cold Grave, there to rot and return to that Dust from whence they were formed. *For Dust, O Man! thou art, and to Dust*

Dust thou shalt return again. Gen. chap. iii. ver. 19. But our Souls thus separated from our Bodies will undergo a different Fate, according to the Differences of that State they are in when they go out of this World. They will either be received into Heaven as the Saints or be condemned to Hell, as wicked, impenitent Sinners ; or be detained for a Time in Purgatory in a suffering State, as imperfect Christians. Yet, as our Saviour tells the Jews in the Gospel for this Day, we shall all, in God's appointed Time rise again, Body and Soul. All who are in the Grave shall hear his Voice and come forth at the last Day of a general Resurrection, then to undergo that great and strict Judgment, when every one shall be rewarded according to his Deserts, and according to what he has done in this Life. The just, those who have lived piously in the Observance of the Gospel and the Exercise of good Works, shall rise to eternal Life and Happiness. But the wicked, those who lived in Sin and died without true Repentance, shall rise and be condemned to the Torments of Hell for ever. This general Resurrection and last Judgment is what our blessed Lord frequently recommends to our Consideration, that we may be careful to prepare ourselves for it by good Works and a holy Life. Seriously and often to reflect on the Terrors of the last Day, and the strict Account we must then give of all our Thoughts, Words and Actions, will be an excellent Remedy against Sin, and a powerful

Motive to abstain from it: For this Reason the wise Man says: *In all thy Works, remember thy latter End, and thou wilt never sin.* *Eccclus.* chap. vii. ver. 40.

To these Reflections on Death and Judgment, we may profitably add, on this Day, some serious Thoughts on the sad Condition of those Souls, who departing this Life in an imperfect State, are detained in that Place of suffering, where they must remain till the Justice of God shall be satisfied, and themselves be cleansed by those purging Flames; for, as no unclean Thing shall enter Heaven. *Apoc.* chap. xxi. ver. 27. Whatever has been defective in this Life, must there be supplied. We may consider these suffering Souls crying out in the Words of holy *Job*: *Have pity on me, have pity on me, O ye my Friends, for the Hand of the Lord has touched me.* *Job* chap. xix. ver. 21. If we consider the grievous Pains these suffering Souls endure, and the sad Affliction they are in, we must have very little Charity not to compassionate them. We may reflect that, according to *St. Augustin*, this purging Fire is far more grievous than any Pain we can feel, or even imagine in this World: and should there be no Fire, yet the being deprived of the beatifick Vision and Enjoyment of God, to which the Soul then tends, and for which it most ardently longs, is a most grievous Affliction, and inexpressible Torment, as the Pains and Sufferings of the Mind are vastly more afflicting than those of the Body. While
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the Soul is detained in the Body, it is, as it were, in a Prison, hood-winked and blinded, amidst a thousand sensible and different Objects which strike upon the Senses, so that it cannot clearly see the great End for which it was created, God, and the Enjoyment of him. But when it is separated from the Body, it is at Liberty, the Hood is taken off, and it sees and discovers that amiable Object, and is carried towards it with so great and vehement a Desire that every Obstacle and Impediment to its Possession causes an inexpressible Anxiety and Torment, and which is exceedingly aggravated by reflecting that the Hindrance it finds proceeds from itself, and the great Carelessness and Negligence it was here guilty of in the Service of God, and the Business of Salvation. It is in Purgatory that negligent Christians see their Folly, and condemn themselves for it. Alas! they there find that many Things which here they counted Trifles, and of no Moment, are the cause of their Suffering. Christians! it will be a dear Price we shall one Day pay for neglecting here to finish and balance our Accounts. A severe Satisfaction to be made for those little Liberties we here indulge ourselves in, which, though perhaps, not to be charged as directly sinful, yet proceeding from inordinate Inclinations and worldly Desires must be attoned for, and all the Stains thereby contracted, be washed away by Tears and Suffering.

From the Intention of this Day's Solemnity we may learn first to pray with Fervour and Devotion for the Faithful departed, and not only to pray, but to give Alms, and perform other good Works in their Behalf, and for them. To be wanting in this is to be wanting both to Faith and Charity. For how can we believe there is a Purgatory, and not pity those who are suffering in it? How can we pity them, and not pray for their Relief? Secondly, the Consideration of the Sufferings of the Souls in Purgatory may give us a right Idea of the Justice of God on them, and make us watchful over ourselves, that we may be careful how we commit Sin, which is the Fuel that feeds this Fire. Thirdly, from this Consideration to be moved to do Justice on ourselves, by voluntary Punishment, by Fasting, Self-denial, Mortifications, such as are suitable to our State; by which Means we shall more easily prevent our falling under the Justice of God, for if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged. In like Manner, that is in a Spirit of Penance, to accept of all those Troubles and Misfortunes which come upon us by the Permission of God, offering them up in Satisfaction for our Sins, and bearing them with Patience and Submission to his holy Will; confessing him to be just in all his Ways, and merciful in giving us an Opportunity of discharging our Debts of Sin both as to the Guilt and Punishment. It is much better and easier to suffer here than hereafter, and the voluntary Sufferings we undergo

dergo at present, and those which come upon us against our Wills, supported with Patience and Resignation, may prove, if not all, yet great Part of our Purgatory here, unless we ourselves hinder it by Impatience, Murmuring and Discontent. And this we may be assured of, that the more we flatter and indulge ourselves in this World, the more we shall have to suffer in the next: The greater Liberties we take here, the dearer shall we pay for them hereafter, and wish then we had not so very easily hearkened to the Suggestions of corrupt Nature and Self-love. These serious Reflections on the Pains of Purgatory, and what the Souls detained therein suffer, may be very beneficial to us, that while we pray for the Dead that God would please to put an End to their Sufferings, we may be careful by a Life of Penance and good Works either to prevent or shorten our own. These are proper Sentiments for Christians joining with the Church in the solemn Offices of this Day, and it will be our own Fault if we do not profit by them. What would those poor suffering Souls give to have it in their Power to do, what we now have in ours? Let us, therefore, while we have Time, do what we can for ourselves; and for them, that by the Mercy of God they may the sooner enjoy eternal Rest and Peace.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus, sweet Saviour, yet just Judge of all Mankind! May the Virtue and Merits of

thy sacred Passion descend into Purgatory on the Souls there detained, and who with longing Expectation wait for their Deliverance. Be graciously pleased to shorten their Time of Expiation, and mercifully admit them into thy holy Sanctuary. Visit, O bountiful Lord, thy Servants detained in that Place of Sorrow and Mourning, and transport them to the City of eternal Peace, and crown their Hopes with happy Fruition.

My God! how justly do we deserve the severest Punishment for our Sins, for our Ingratitudes to thee, and the ill Use we make of thy Mercies! If our departed Souls are forced to wait in a suffering State, it is not because thou delightest in our Punishment; no, my God! thou art all Mercy and Goodness. It is according to the wise Order of thy adorable Councils, and that thy Justice may, as it ought, be satisfied! and we be taught to know the sad Effects of Sin, and the Folly of giving way to our corrupt Inclinations, and a too great Attachment to the Things of this World. O Lord, I bow down and adore thy most just and holy Appointments. Thy Judgments are just, and all thy Ways righteous: but in the midst of Judgment remember Mercy. Hear the Prayers and Sighs of thy suffering Servants, regard their Tears and have Pity on them. Accept the Prayers and Suffrages of thy whole Church in their Behalf. Eternal Rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual Light shine upon them.

NOVEMBER

N O V E M B E R. 21.

Presentation of the B. V. Mary.

THIS Day is a Festival of Devotion in Honour of the blessed Virgin, and in Memory of her being at the Age of three Years, presented by her Parents in the Temple to God, and thereby consecrated to him. According to *Baronius* in the antient Rituals, the Purification of the blessed Virgin, and when she carried her divine Infant Son to the Temple, is called her Presentation. But the learned Cardinal observes at the same Time, that this Feast of the Presentation of the Virgin *Mary* in her Infancy, was very antiently observed in the Eastern Church, from whence it passed into *Italy*, and from *Rome* to *France*. *Gavant, com. in Rub. sect. 7. ch. 13.* mentions the Sermons of *S. Gregory Nyssen*, *St. Germanus Patriarch of Constantinople*, and *George Bishop of Nicomedia*, who lived about the Year 1000, upon this Feast. In *France* it was commanded to be observed by King *Charles V. 1375.* Father *Thomassin*, in his Treatise of the Feasts of the Church, *Lib. 2. Cap. 20.* tells us, that this Prince, in a Letter to the Doctors and Students of the Royal College of *Navarre*, is very particular in the Circumstances of this Festival, how it was received at *Rome*, and in the Western Church. The Chancellor of *Cyprus* being

318 *Presentation of the B. V. Nov. 21.*

being sent Ambassador from the King of *Cyprus* and *Jerusalem* to the Pope, took occasion to let his Holiness know that this Feast was solemnly observed in the Eastern Churches on the 21st of *November*, and presented him with the Office used on that Day. This Office the Pope first examined himself and then again by several Cardinals and Divines, and it being approved by them, he allowed the Observance of this Festival, and celebrated it himself, assisted by his Cardinals and a numerous Concourse of People. The same Chancellor of *Cyprus* going from *Rome* to *France*, presented the King with the same Office, and acquainted him in what Manner it had been approved, and the Feast kept at *Rome*. The pious Monarch yielded to the Desires of the Ambassador, and the Festival was celebrated in his royal Chapel in the Presence of many Prelates and Nobles by the Pope's Nuncio, who preached upon the Occasion, and was afterwards observed throughout the whole Kingdom, as it now is in the universal Church, in Honour of the Presentation of the blessed Virgin in the Temple when she was but three Years old. From whence Parents may learn their Duty, to offer up their Children in their Infancy to God, and to be careful to imprint in their tender Minds Principles of Virtue and Piety, and to instruct them, as they grow up, in the Obligations they lie under, and of their being thus consecrated to God. Every one may also learn from this Feast to offer and present himself to
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Presentation of the B. V. Nov. 21. 319

God, and to consecrate all his Actions to the divine Honour and Glory. And if with these Sentiments we celebrate this Festival, we shall reap the Benefit of it.

The GOSPEL. St. Luke, chap. xi. ver. 27.

And it came to pass: as he spoke these Things, a certain Woman from the Crowd, lifting up her Voice, said to him: Blessed is the Womb that bore thee, and the Paps that gave thee Suck. 28. But he said: yea rather blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

It was not without Reason that this pious Woman in the Gospel pronounced the Womb blessed which bore our Saviour. The holy Virgin herself, when out of her great Humility she stiled herself the Handmaid of the Lord, declared at the same Time, that all Generations should call her blessed. And the Angel *Gabriel* said to her: *Blessed art thou among Women.* St. *Luke*, chap. i. ver. 28. This gives us a just Occasion to consider the Prerogatives and Excellencies of this Virgin-Mother of Christ. She was chosen before all the Daughters of *Adam* to be the happy Mother of the promised *Messias*, Jesus Christ the Son of God, true God, equal with the Father in all Things, one and the same God with him, and thereby

became, what she is justly called by the Church the Mother of God. To this Dignity she was raised, and for this she was prepared by a Plenitude of Grace infused into her holy Soul in the Instant of her Conception. Hence the Angel *Gabriel* saluted her with *Hail Mary full of Grace*: And from hence we may reasonably infer, that whatever internal Grace and Virtue was ever bestowed upon any Saint, the same, in a much more abundant and perfect Manner, was conferred upon the blessed Virgin: Consequently to this, *St. Anselm* says, *It was fitting the blessed Virgin should be adorned with that Purity, a greater than which, under God, could not be conceived. S. Anselm Lib. de con. V. Chap. 2.* In the same Manner *St. Bernard* speaks: *To others Grace is imparted by Parts, but on Mary the whole Fulness thereof was poured forth. S. Bernard Serm. Signum magnum.* Let us admire these excellent Prerogatives of the Mother of Jesus, and praise him the Author of all these Graces, and the Fountain from whence they sprung; and learn to reverence, honour and respect the blessed Virgin, that we may obtain the Benefit of her holy Intercession, who is truly able to help us by her Prayers, and will do it if we endeavour to deserve it by imitating her Virtues, the only Way to gain her Favour and Protection. Like her, therefore, let us daily consecrate ourselves to the Love and Service of God, who is our sovereign Lord and great Creator, from whom we have received all we have, and to whom we strictly
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and properly belong. Not to do this, is to commit a manifest Injustice, and will draw upon ourselves his Displeasure, the Consequences of which will be very fatal to us. This Dedication of ourselves to God, we should make in our early Years, as soon as we come to the Use of Reason, and know that we are made by him and for him, and thereby ratify that Oblation our Parents made of us in our Baptism, and confirm that Covenant which our Sureties then made with God in our Name, and for us. The same we should frequently renew, especially at particular Times, upon the Anniversary of our Birth-Day, on solemn Festivals, and on this Feast when we honour and celebrate the Presentation of the blessed Virgin. This will be, like her, to make a right Use of the Graces we have received from God and obtain greater and more plentiful Favours from him here, and will effectually secure our eternal Happiness hereafter.

Another important and instructive Lesson we may learn from the Gospel of this Feast, and from what our Saviour says: *Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it.* Our blessed Lord does not here contradict the Woman who pronounced the Womb blessed which bore him, nor denies that his Virgin Mother was blessed, but pronounces all those likewise blessed, who attentively hearken to the Word of God when preached, and are careful to put in practice what they hear and are taught. To love to hear the Word of God,

to be assiduous in hearing Sermons and pious Instructions is very good, when accompanied with a Desire and Purpose to keep it. To hear it only sometimes out of Custom or Curiosity, and not to mind or remember it; to hear and not observe it, is doing nothing, and will be of no Advantage to us; for *not the Hearers of the Law are just before God; but the Doers of the Law shall be justified.* Rom. chap. ii. ver. 13. As preaching the Word of God is one of those Means he has appointed for instructing us in our Duty, and by that to be induced to practise it, the sincere good Christian will esteem himself happy when he has an Opportunity of hearing the Word of God preached: He will hearken to it with Attention, and the divine Seed then falling upon good Ground, on a Heart and Mind rightly disposed, will bring forth Fruit in Abundance. To hear the Word of God, and keep it, is to make it the Rule of our Lives, by which we must be directed in our Conduct: But if we swerve from this Rule and act contrary to the holy Maxims of it, what Profit will it be to us? None at all. In this Case we are like Servants who knowing their Masters Will and not doing it must expect to be severely punished. This, therefore, may and ought to be considered as an important Point, and, if considered in this Light, might make many Christians more diligent in hearing and attending to Sermons. It would make appear how weak and of how little Force is the too common
Excuse

Excuse for not hearing Sermons: What need I go to a Sermon? The Preacher can tell me no more than what I know: I am not ignorant of my Duty, nor want to be so often put in mind of it. But such seem to forget what Scripture says: *The wise Man by hearing shall become more wise. Prov. chap. i. ver. 5.* We none of us know so much, but we may know more, and not only our Understanding may be more enlightened by frequent Hearing, but our Will also be more, and effectually moved to the Practice of what we hear, and of what we know. And when Christ pronounces all those blessed who hear the Word of God and keep it, he speaks by Way of Encouragement, and to make us diligent in what tends so much to render us eternally happy in the Kingdom of Heaven.

ASPIRATIONS.

O sovereign Lord of all Things! all Creatures are thine, and depend on thee. I also am thine, and I desire always to remain so. O my God! by the most deliberate Act and Choice of my free Will I now present and give myself unto thee, and in such a Manner, that, as while I live I cannot cease to breathe, so while I breathe, I will never cease to offer and consecrate myself unto thee.

In Acknowledgment of thy supreme Sovereignty and Dominion and of my entire Dependence on thee, I now humbly offer myself

324 *Presentation of the B. V. Nov. 21.*

self and all that I have to thee ; my Heart, my Body and my Soul ; my Memory, Will and Understanding ; my Thoughts, my Words and my Actions ; my whole interior and exterior. All these I received from thee ; all which I now return back again to thee, and consecrate to thy holy Service. O my God, thou hast made me, and I am thine : Thou hast redeemed me and I am doubly thine ; I am also thine by the Title of all those Benefits which thou hast conferred upon me. To whom then should I adhere, but to thee ; and whom should I serve but thee ? Thou art my Lord and my God, to thee alone I will adhere, I will love none but thee, and thee only will I serve.

O sacred and holy Virgin Mother of God, whose pure and unspotted Womb did bear the Saviour of the World, whose chaste and holy Breasts did give him Suck ! Pray for me, and obtain for me Grace that I may truly love God, hear his holy Word and keep it, and thereby be blessed and happy for ever.

NOVEMBER 30.

St. ANDREW, Apostle.

THIS holy Apostle was a Native of *Bethsaida* in *Galilee*, and Brother to *St. Peter*. Being a Disciple of *St. John Baptist*, standing one Day with his Master, he heard him give that Elogium and Testimony of Christ as he passed by, *Behold the Lamb of God*. *St. John*, chap. i. ver. 29. Upon which, with another of *St. John's* Disciples, he followed Jesus, who seeing them, demanded what they sought ; to which they replied, *Master where dwellest thou ?* And being invited by our Saviour to see, they went and remained with him that Day. Afterwards, *St. Andrew* finding his Brother *Simon Peter*, told him, he had found the *Messias*, and carried him to Christ, who immediately called him by his Name, *Simon*, Son of *Jona*, and changed that of *Simon* to *Peter* ; telling him, he should be called *Cephas*, or *Petrus*, which signifies a Rock, designing to make him the Chief of the Apostles, and Head of the Church. Some Time after this, our blessed Saviour walking near the Sea of *Galilee*, saw *St. Andrew* and *St. Peter* casting their Nets into the Sea, as Fishermen by Trade, and said to them, *Follow me, and I will make you become Fishers of Men*. *St. Matt.* chap. iv. ver. 19. On which they
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immediately left their Nets and followed him. After which, St. *Andrew* was chosen by Christ to be one of the twelve Apostles, and is always named immediately after St. *Peter*, by the Evangelists.

After our blessed Lord's Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost, when the Apostles separated and left *Jerusalem*, in order to propagate the Gospel, St. *Andrew* went and preached the Christian Faith to the *Scythians* and *Sagdians*, among whom, having laboured with great Success, he travelled from thence into *Egypt*, *Thracia*, and *Achaia*, now *Morea*, and coming to *Patras*, the Capital of that Province, by his zealous Labours and fervent Preaching wonderfully advanced the spiritual Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and converted great Numbers from the Worship of Idols to acknowledge and believe in the Son of God. This drew upon him the Resentment of *Ægeas* the Proconsul, or Governor, by whose Orders the holy Apostle being seized and brought before him, in a haughty and menacing Tone he commanded St. *Andrew* to desist from preaching the Faith of Christ, and to sacrifice to the Gods. To this impious Command the holy Apostle, with a noble Courage which shewed he was above Fear, and not to be intimidated, answered, "I daily sacrifice to the one true
" God, not the Flesh of Bulls, nor the Blood
" of Goats, but the unspotted Lamb on the
" Altar, whose Flesh sacrificed, and eat by
" the faithful People, remains still entire and
" alive."

“ alive.” This generous Answer enraged the Proconsul, who sent the undaunted Champion of Christ to Prison, from whence the People would have easily delivered him, had he not prevented them, and appeased the Tumult they were in upon his Apprehension. He begged of them not to hinder his Suffering, nor deprive him of that glorious Crown of Martyrdom he so earnestly desired. The People being thus appeased, after some Time, the Governor commanded the Apostle to be brought again before him, and not being able to move his Constancy, or make him deny Christ, gave Orders that he should be crucified. This Sentence was immediately executed, and the pronouncing of it filled St. *Andrew* with inexpressible Joy, seeing himself about to lay down his Life for his divine Master, and to seal with his Blood the holy Doctrines he had taught. Being carried to the Place of his Martyrdom, and drawing near, when he beheld the Cross prepared for him, his holy Soul broke forth into Raptures of Joy, and thus expressed them :
“ O excellent Cross, that has received Beauty
“ from my suffering Lord ! O Cross, long
“ desired, ardently loved, constantly sought
“ after, and now, at length, prepared for my
“ wishing Soul ! receive me from among Men,
“ and present me to my Master, that he, who
“ by thee redeemed me, by thee may receive
“ me.” Being fastened to the Cross, he remained thereon alive two Days preaching to the People the Faith of Christ, whose Kind of
Death

Death he thus imitated. The Instrument of his Martyrdom was a Cross of a peculiar Form, and in the Shape of the Letter X, being two Pieces of Timber crossing each other in the Middle. He suffered on the 30th of *November*. His Body was embalmed and decently interred by *Maximilla*, a Lady of great Quality. Afterwards it was removed to *Constantinople* by *Constantine* the Great, and deposited in a stately Church which he had built in Honour of the twelve Apostles. His Head was translated some Ages after to *Rome*, under the Pontificate of *Pius II.* and placed in the Church of St. *Peter*.

The GOSPEL. St. *Matt.* chap. iv. ver. 18.

And Jesus walking by the Sea of *Galilee*, saw two Brethren, *Simon* who is called *Peter*, and *Andrew* his Brother, casting a Net into the Sea, for they were Fishers. 19. And he saith to them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to be Fishers of Men. 20. And immediately leaving their Nets, they followed him. 21. And going on from thence, he saw other two Brethren, *James* the Son of *Zebedee*, and *John* his Brother, in a Ship with *Zebedee* their Father, mending their Nets: and he called them. 22. And they forthwith left their Nets, and their Father, and followed him.

REFLECTIONS.

How wonderful is this Call of St. *Andrew* by Jesus Christ ! nor is it less instructive. Our Saviour walking by the Sea of *Galilee*, saw him with his Brother St. *Peter*, casting a Net into the Sea, and said to them, *Follow me, and I will make you become Fishers of Men.* Happy Call for this Apostle, which drew him from the Condition of a Fisherman, to be an Attendant on the Son of God ! His poor and low State was no Bar to the Design Christ had upon him, for with God there is no Exception of Persons. The Poor are equally dear to him as the Rich. This Call of St. *Andrew* to the Apostleship by Jesus Christ is an instructive Representation of God's daily Call to every one to his holy Service. He calls every one, in all States and Conditions, High and Low, Rich and Poor, to follow him, in the Observance of his divine Commands. He bids every one leave the entangling Nets of the World, and the dangerous Amusements of it, to follow and adhere to him. We are not, indeed, all called to be Apostles, as St. *Andrew* was, but we are called to be Disciples of Jesus Christ, which none can be but by leaving and renouncing all inordinate and criminal Love of the World, and all undue Attachment to the Riches, Honours and Pleasures of it ; for they are very great Incumbrances, and but too often the Occasion that we do not hear, or hearken

as we ought to the Calls of God, who daily solicits us by the Inspirations of his holy Spirit, by the good Thoughts he puts into our Minds, by good Books which we read, and by the Ministers of his holy Word. Thus, Jesus walks by, as it were, the Sea of this World, where we are too busily occupied in fishing after the Things of it, and bids us follow him, not without a gracious Promise of rewarding our Obedience. It is our Duty, and it will be our Happiness if we obey his Call. If we quit the World we shall gain Heaven. O that Christians would consider this seriously! the World then and the transitory Enjoyments of it would not be more powerful to detain us, than the Voice of Jesus to induce us to follow him in the Discharge of those Duties which are incumbent upon us Christians, professing ourselves his Disciples.

St. *Andrew* has set us an instructive Example of a prompt and ready Obedience. Christ only said to him, *Follow me, and I will make you become Fishers of Men*; and immediately he and his Brother *Simon Peter*, left their Nets and followed him. Happy Resolution! the more to be admired, in that leaving his Nets, St. *Andrew* left the Business on which he depended for his Subsistence. He left them immediately, without any Demur, or standing upon any Conditions: And it is in such a prompt and ready Obedience we are to imitate this holy Apostle. When God calls us to his Service, we should readily comply and obey,

obey, as it is no less our Interest than our Duty to do, nor must we make Excuses drawn from worldly Motives, and temporal Considerations. We have no Reason to fear, or apprehend that we shall be Losers by addicting ourselves to the Service of God. Our blessed Lord in his divine Sermon on the Mount bids us *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Justice*, and assures us, that all other Things necessary and expedient shall be given to us. God does not so call us to his Service, as not to allow us to mind the necessary Duties and Offices of that State of Life he has placed us in. The performing them with an upright and good Intention, according to the Order of God, in the different Stations of Life, is that very Service of God to which we are called. And when we are exhorted to hearken to the Call of Jesus Christ, and to follow him, it is that Call by which he bids us leave and lay aside all inordinate and criminal Attachment to the Things of this World; he calls us from Pride, Ambition, and greedy Desire of growing rich. To this Call we must answer, and comply, and not let ourselves be so far entangled in the Nets of a worldly Life, and a continual Anxiety and Solitude for Riches and Abundance, as to find no Leisure to attend the one Thing necessary, the Salvation of our Souls. If we do, we must not expect that he will regard us as his Disciples and Followers. If St. *Andrew* had preferred his Fishing Nets before following Christ, and chose to have remained in his Boat,

Boat, he had never attained the Dignity of an Apostle, nor been, as he is, revered on Earth and honoured in Heaven. This Honour was conferred upon him in Reward of his prompt and ready Obedience; and if we desire to share in the Favours of Jesus, we must, like this holy Apostle, readily obey his Calls, and follow him.

To induce us thus to follow Christ, we may farther consider the Promise he made to St. Andrew: *I will make you a Fisher of Men.* Our Saviour called him from his Fishing-Boat, and soon after adopted him into the Apostolic College as an Earnest of a greater future Recompence. Hence, when St. Peter, who was called at the same Time with St. Andrew, said to our blessed Lord, *Behold we have left all to follow thee, what then shall we have?* St. Matt. chap. xix ver. 27. Christ replied, they should sit on twelve Seats to judge, with him, the twelve Tribes of *Israel*. And further declared that every one who should abandon, and leave any Thing for him, should receive a hundred-fold, and possess Life everlasting. A glorious Recompence, infinitely exceeding all that we can possibly lose in this World. The Consideration of which will be a great Encouragement to follow Jesus Christ, and to despise all the vain Pleasures of this World. For what Comparison can there be made between Earth and Heaven? All that the World can possibly give is but short, uncertain, and for a few Years at most, but the Joys of Heaven
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are everlasting, never to end. Nor is this Recompence our Saviour promises to be considered only with regard to the next World, but is very great even in this Life. This will be experienced in the happy Peace of a good Conscience, and those interior Comforts to be found in the Service of God, infinitely more desirable, infinitely more satisfactory than all the vain Amusements of Sin and Folly. This happy Peace of Mind joined to a well grounded Hope of future Bliss, renders the Service of God easy and pleasant, and experimentally proves the Truth of what Christ says; *My Yoke is sweet and my Burden light.* St. Matt. chap. xi. ver. 30.

ASPIRATIONS.

O Bounty and Goodness of Jesus! who would not chuse to follow and serve such a Master? How much, dear Lord, do thy Rewards exceed our little Services! When we have abandoned all, what do we leave? A little, short and seeming Satisfaction; and for this thou givest us even here a hundred-fold Recompence, and hereafter will bestow upon us all the Glories of an eternal Kingdom. O happy Service of a Master so generous and beneficent! Ah my God! shall I make any Difficulty or Demur upon leaving the Service of the World to follow thee? Can I hesitate, even for a Moment, whether my Happiness does not consist in loving and serving thee? O
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334 *Conception of the B. Virgin.*

thou only true Life of my Soul ! I can never be happy but in loving thee, and I shall, alas ! be miserable if I love thee not. All that this World can afford is an empty Nothing, miserable Trifles, and which I will freely give up and abandon to become thy Disciple and to follow thee, O Jesus, my divine Lord and Master.

Glorious St. *Andrew* ! thou didst leave all to follow Christ ; pray for me. While I honour your Memory, may I likewise imitate your Example here upon Earth, and with you one Day enjoy the Happiness of Heaven.

DECEMBER 8.

Conception of the *Blessed Virgin.*

THIS Day is a Festival in Honour of the Conception of the blessed Virgin *Mary*, and to thank God for the Benefits thereby conferred upon Mankind, she being, as it were, the *Aurora* to that happy Day whereon the Sun of Righteousness arose to bless the World with his glorious Beams, and to enlighten those who sat in Darkness and in the Shadow of Death. Her being chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of Mankind, is a sufficient Cause for us to rejoice in, and celebrate her Conception, as well as her Nativity ; and with grateful Hearts to
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call to mind the glorious Mystery of our Redemption, of which she may be considered as the instrumental Cause, and on which Account all Nations ought to stile her blessed.

As to the first Institution of this Feast, there is some Difference among the Authors who have writ on the Church Festivals. Some with *Trithenicus* assert it was first celebrated in Spain by S. *Ildephonse*, who flourished about the Year 667. Others attribute it to *Gondisalvus*, Bishop of *Thoulouse* in the Year 800. *Gavant*, *Com. in Rub. Sect. 7. ch. 2.* takes notice of its being observed by *Frederick* Patriarch of *Aquileia*, antiently the Metropolis of the Commonwealth of *Venice*, and of all *Istria*, who died in the Year 897. In *France* the Chapter of the Church at *Lyons*, anno 1145, made a Decree that this Feast should be observed; against which *St. Bernard*, *Ep. 174.* writ with some Warmth, not that the holy Man objected any Thing against the Feast, but condemns the Canons of *Lyons* for attempting to institute it without the Knowledge and Approbation of the See Apostolic, to whose Judgment he thought it should be reserved. From the Opposition of *St. Bernard*, and some others at that Time, it is probable this Feast was not received in *France* till a great while after, and by Degrees. In *England* it seems to have been first introduced by S. *Anselm* Archbishop of *Canterbury*, or at least to have been approved, and the Observation of it encouraged by him, who established it in his Cathedral at

336 *Conception of the B. V. Dec. 8.*

Canterbury, whereby it came to be observed throughout the Realm, though not as a Holiday of Obligation, but as a Festival of Devotion, as appears by the Council of *Worcester* held 1240, which composing a Calendar of the Feasts throughout the Year, mentions all the other Festivals of the blessed Virgin then observed as Holidays, but takes no Notice of her Conception. Thus it continued till the Synod of *Exeter* 1287, when it was made a Festival to be observed, and reckoned among those of the Month of *December*. In a council held at *London* 1328, the Conception of the blessed Virgin was declared a Holiday of Obligation, to be solemnly observed with a Prohibition of servile Works as on other Holidays; and in the Catalogue of Feasts, published by *Richard Arundel* Archbishop of *Canterbury*, it is mentioned among the Feasts of *December*. From hence it appears not to have been a general Holiday of Obligation in *England* till about the Middle of the fourteenth Century. By the Change of Religion it lost that Dignity, and was not observed as a Precept by Catholics, but of late Years has been restored, and is now kept as a Holiday of Obligation.

In *Rome* it was not received, nor celebrated till after the Time of Pope *Innocent III.* who died in the Year 1216, and the first public Decree for the whole Church we meet with is that of the Council of *Basil*, Anno 1439, which ordered that this Feast should be observed on the 8th of *December*, according to the antient
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and laudable Custom of the *Roman* and other Churches. It was again ordered to be kept throughout the whole Church 1483, by Pope *Sixtus IV.* by a Bull issued out for that End and to which he annexed the Grant of several Indulgences. In the Annals of the Order of *S. Francis* by Father *Luke Wadding*, Tom. 2. there is a Decree of a general Chapter of the Order held at *Pisa* in the Presence of *S. Bonaventure*, then General, in the Year 1263, by which this Feast is ordered to be celebrated in the Order, and is a Proof that it was not then kept at *Rome*, nor by the *Roman* particular Church, but at the same Time it approved of their Devotion who did. In the *Greek* Church it has been universally observed from the Time of the Emperor *Manuel Comnenus*, who began his Reign 1143, and died 1180. There is a Constitution of this Emperor ordering the Conception of the blessed Virgin to be numbered among those Festivals which were solemnly to be kept, and mentions it on the 9th of *December*. This was about the Time that the Chapter of the Church of *Lyons* decreed to observe it. We may further observe, that if in the Eastern Church it was sooner received, as to the general Observation of it in those Parts, yet the Western Church gave the first Rise to its Institution, and most probably it begun first to be observed in *England*, as appears by what has been said of *S. Anselm* either instituting, or at least encouraging and promoting the Observance of it, and his dying in the Year 1109

338 *Conception of the B. V. Dec. 8.*

which was thirty Years before the abovementioned Constitution of the Emperor *Manuel*.

The GOSPEL. *St. Matt. chap. i. ver. 1.*

The Book of the Generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of *David*, the Son of *Abraham*. 2. *Abraham* begot *Isaac*, and *Isaac* begot *Jacob*. And *Jacob* begot *Judas* and his Brethren. 3. And *Judas* begot *Phares* and *Zara* of *Thamar*. And *Phares* begot *Efron*; and *Efron* begot *Aram*. 4. And *Aram* begot *Aminadab*. And *Aminadab* begot *Naassen*. And *Naassen* begot *Salmon*. 5. And *Salmon* begot *Booz* of *Rahab*. And *Booz* begot *Obed* of *Ruth*. And *Obed* begot *Jesse*. 6. And *Jesse* begot *David* the King. And *David* the King begot *Solomon*, of her that had been the Wife of *Urias*. 7. And *Solomon* begot *Roboam*. And *Roboam* begot *Abia*. And *Abia* begot *Afa*. 8. And *Afa* begot *Josaphat*. And *Josaphat* begot *Joram*. And *Joram* begot *Ozias*. 9. And *Ozias* begot *Joatham*. And *Joatham* begot *Achaz*. And *Achaz* begot *Ezechias*. 10. And *Ezechias* begot *Manasses*. And *Manasses* begot *Amon*. And *Amon* begot *Josias*. 11. And *Josias* begot *Jechonias* and his Brethren in the Transmigration to *Babylon*. 12. And after the Transmigration to *Babylon*, *Jechonias* begot *Sa'athiel*. And *Salathiel* begot *Zorobabel*. 13. And *Zorobabel* begot *Abiud*. And *Abiud* begot *Eliacim*. And *Eliacim* begot *Azor*. 14. And *Azor* begot *Sadec*. And *Sadec* begot *Achim*. And *Achim* begot

begot *Eliud*. 15. And *Eliud* begot *Eleazer*. And *Eleazer* begot *Mathan*. And *Mathan* begot *Jacob*. 16. And *Jacob* begot *Joseph* the Husband of *Mary*, of whom was born *Jesus* who is called *Christ*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

In celebrating this Feast of the Conception of the blessed Virgin, and considering what is recorded in the Gospel of this Day, we may observe how true and faithful God is to his Promises. He had told the holy Patriarch *Abraham*, that in his Seed all Nations should be blessed, and therefore chose for the Mother of the World's Redeemer a Virgin sprung from his Race, and descended from the Royal Family of *David*. As the blessed Virgin *Mary* was the Mother of *Jesus Christ* our Saviour, this Feast gives us an Occasion not only of honouring the sacred Virgin and to praise God for her holy Conception, but likewise to consider the happy Consequences of it in that great Work of Mercy, the Redemption of Mankind, and we then best honour the Conception of the Virgin Mother when we consider it with Reference to the Nativity of her divine Son. Here a large Field of pious Thoughts presents itself to our View. Here we may consider God truly wonderful in all his Ways, disposing the sacred Virgin to become the Mother of his Son *Jesus Christ*, and who to render her more fit for that sublime

Dignity bestowed upon her a full Plenitude of Grace. Such was holy *Mary*, of whom was born *Jefus* who is called *Chrift*. Her Conception, therefore, is to be confidered as preparatory to his Nativity which brought Redemption, Joy and Happinefs to Mankind, and is a juft Subject of thofe folemn Praises the Church renders to God on this Feftival, and in which we ought to join with all Fervour and Devotion, fenfible of the Greatnefs of thofe Mercies we commemorate, and with fincere Refolutions by his Grace to correfpond with and make a right Ufe of them, but of which, otherwife, we fhall never partake. From hence we may alfo learn a right Notion of Holidays, and of keeping them according to the Spirit and Intention of the Church. It would be a very great Miftake to imagine that nothing more is required than a bare external Appearance at her folemn Offices on thefe Days. This is one Part of our Duty, but we fhould likewife attentively confider the practical Leffons the Church teaches us on thefe Feafts. With thefe Sentiments we ought to join with the Church in celebrating the Conception of the Virgin *Mary*, and in honouring God the Author of all thofe Graces and Favours which were beftowed upon her.

From this Feftival then we are taught to imitate the bleffed Virgin in her Humility, her Purity, her Obedience and ardent Love of God. Thefe Virtues appear remarkably conspicuous in her Life and Actions, and are Virtues which
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we are obliged to practise. If we do not how can we expect to reap any Benefit from keeping her Feasts, or by honouring of her? What will it signify to admire and honour the wonderful Humility of the blessed Virgin, if we are proud and ambitious? Shall we pretend to honour and revere her great Purity and unspotted Chastity; and abandon ourselves to criminal Impurities? Do we honour her Obedience and perfect Resignation to the Will of God? Let us learn from her Example to be truly obedient to his Law, and carefully keep all his Commandments. Let us learn from holy *Mary* to be perfectly resigned, and submissive to all the Appointments of his divine Will. Thus shall we honour the blessed Virgin as we ought, and keep these Solemnities with spiritual Profit and Advantage to ourselves.

Further, if we consider this Feast of the Conception of the Virgin *Mary* as preparatory to the Coming of Jesus Christ in the Flesh, we there behold the wonderful Love of God to Mankind, in sending his only Son into the World to be our Saviour and Redeemer, and are taught our Duty, and what we are to do that he may truly be our Saviour and we be saved by him. For this we must love him who has so loved us, and make his holy Will the Rule of our Conduct, by doing whatever he commands. *If you love me, keep my Commandments*, is what he says to his Disciples, *St. John*, chap. xiv. Ver. 15. If we do not love God, and shew our Love to him by keep-

ing his Commandments, we have little Reason to hope we shall ever find Jesus to be a Saviour to us. Now, as all wilful Sin is a wilful Breach of the Commands of God, and renders us displeasing to him, how careful ought we to be to avoid Sin? But what can be said by, and for those Christians who acknowledge these serious Truths, and yet wilfully live in Sin? It must be owned the Case of such is very dangerous, and nothing can secure them from the Danger they are in, but a timely Repentance and Amendment. This indeed will entitle them to share in the Blessings of this holy Feast: And repenting Sinners may consider the Conception of the blessed Virgin, as the happy Prelude to that Mercy the Son of God comes into the World to bring to all such. Since he has expressly declared he came to seek and to save that which was lost. Nothing can be more comfortable; and nothing more proper for our Entertainment on this Festival than these Reflections; comfortable both for Sinners, and for good virtuous Christians; comfortable to Sinners, as encouraging them to lay hold of the proffered Mercy, comfortable to good Christians, animating them to go on with Zeal and Fervour in the Service of God, till by Perseverance they come to enjoy him in the happy Society of the blessed Virgin, and all the Saints in the Kingdom of Heaven.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O how adorable are thy Counsels, O Lord,
how

how strangely endearing are the Ways of thy Love! O thou most sweet and amiable Redeemer of Mankind! I here behold the Excess of thy Love to us poor unworthy Sinners. It was out of Love to us and for our Sakes that thou didst chuse this holy Virgin to be thy Mother, that thou mightest become our Saviour and Redeemer. Ah, dearest Lord! let me not be insensible of this Mercy, nor ungrateful to thy Bounty. O that I could love thee again, and as I ought! I desire, O my God, to make thee some Return, the best I am able, and to love thee as much as I can, for I can never love thee as much as thou deservest to be loved. But shall I pretend to love thee, O Jesus, and not keep thy Commandments? Ah, no, my dearest Lord! let this be far from me. I will love thee, and will therefore obey thee, and I will obey thee because I love thee. Inflame my Heart with the Fire of divine Love which may burn up and consume all Coldness, Lukewarmness and Tepidity in thy holy Service; and may I continue faithful unto thee to the last Moment of my Life, O Jesus, my Saviour! my God and my all!

O sacred Virgin Mother of Jesus, most pure, most chaste and undefiled, pray for me. I beg your holy Intercession, that by your Prayers I may be preserved from all Sin, and obtain Grace to love my God above all Things, to serve him faithfully in this World, and be happy with him in the next.

D E C E M B E R 21.

St. THOMAS, Apostle.

THIS Saint was born in *Galilee*, and by Christ chosen to be one of the Twelve Apostles. In this Quality he shewed an extraordinary Courage and Love for our blessed Saviour, who having been ill treated by the Jews, and telling his Apostles that he was going up to *Jerusalem*, they endeavoured to dissuade him from it, as dangerous to put himself in the Way of those who sought to kill him. Christ persisting in his mentioned Design, *St. Peter* and the rest, except *St. Thomas*, were troubled and filled with Apprehension not only for him, but also for themselves, and the Danger of being there with him. This Timidity and Fear *St. Thomas* reproved in his Fellow-Disciples, and endeavouring to animate their Minds so as to despise the Danger they apprehended, courageously said to them: *Let us also go that we may die with him*, *St. John*, chap. xi. ver. 16. thereby shewing his Fidelity to his divine Master. After our Lord's Resurrection he betrayed, indeed, a great Weakness and Diffidence, by refusing to believe it on the Testimony of the other Apostles, to whom Christ had appeared when *St. Thomas* was absent from their Company, and carried his Unbelief so far, as to declare he would not believe

believe unless he saw our Saviour himself, and beheld the Wounds in his Hands and Feet, and put his Finger into his Side: With this Demand Christ graciously complied, and appearing again to his Disciples when St. *Thomas* was with them, bid him view his Wounds, and put his Hand into his Side, and believe. This cured our Apostle of his Infidelity, who, convinced by what he saw, cried out: *My Lord, my God.* Being thus confirmed in his Faith, he continued stedfast in it, and after the Descent of the Holy Ghost went and preached the Gospel with great Zeal and Fervour to many Nations, as the *Ethiopians, Parthians, Medes, and Indians*; among whom having gloriously propagated the spiritual Kingdom of Christ, and founded the Christian Church in those Parts, he finished his Apostolic Labours and crowned them by an illustrious Martyrdom at *Malabar*, now the Island of St. *Thomas*, being there thrust through with Lances. What Year he suffered in is uncertain, but his Memory has always been sacred in the Catholic Church, which honours him equally with the other Apostles, and keeps his Feast on the 21st of *December*.

The GOSPEL. St. *John*, chap. xx. ver. 24.

Now *Thomas*, one of the twelve, who is called *Didymus*, was not with them when Jesus came. 25. The other Disciples, therefore, said to him: We have seen the Lord. But he

he said to them: Except I see in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and put my Finger into the Place of the Nails, and put my Hand into his Side, I will not believe. 26. And after eight Days, again his Disciples were within; and *Thomas* with them. Jesus cometh, the Doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said: Peace be to you. 27. Then he saith to *Thomas*: Put in thy Finger hither, and see my Hands, and bring hither thy Hand, and put it into my Side; and be not faithless but believing. 28. *Thomas* answered, and said to him: My Lord, and my God. 29. Jesus saith to him, Because thou hast seen me, *Thomas*, thou hast believed: Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

From what the holy Evangelist relates of *St. Thomas*, in this Gospel, of his refusing to believe the Resurrection of Christ on the Testimony of the other Apostles; and of our blessed Lord's appearing to him, and curing his Infidelity, we may draw many useful and necessary Instructions, which deserve our serious Attention: And first we may learn not to trust too much to ourselves, or presume too much on our own Strength. Courage and Resolution are highly necessary for a Christian and Disciple of Christ; but Self-Confidence and Presumption are dangerous, and the Fore-runners of Ruin. All the Apostles seem to have been
too

too confident of themselves. They all said to our Saviour they would never abandon him, but as our blessed Lord told them, when he was seized in the Garden of *Gethsamani*, they all forsook him; and St. *Peter* thrice denied him, and after his Resurrection they kept themselves private, and with the Doors shut for fear of the Jews; nor would St. *Thomas* at first believe our Saviour was risen from the dead. If this was the Case of the Apostles, of those who had left all to follow Christ, how little Reason have we to be over confident, or trust to ourselves? Our Security, therefore, must be in the Grace of God; and from our Weakness we may learn our own nothing; and to be humble and know our necessary Dependance upon God. Secondly we may observe, that St. *Thomas* was absent when Christ appeared to the other Apostles, and thereby lost the Favour of seeing our blessed Lord when they did. This particular Incident is not mentioned without Design, and gives us a very useful Admonition. Our Saviour has declared that where two or three are gathered together in his Name, he will be in the midst of them. And he appeared to his Disciples when they were assembled together. And as St. *Thomas*, by absenting himself, enjoyed not that Blessing, so in like Manner, when we absent ourselves, without just Reason, from the public Assemblies and Worship of God, we deprive ourselves of those Graces and Favours God bestows upon those who meet in his Name, publickly

lickly to adore and worship him. This Consideration should make us diligent in meeting together in Churches or Chapels, especially at those Times and on those Days when God and his Church require it of us. To say our Prayers at Home is very good, and private Devotion is pleasing to God, but public Devotions and the united Prayers of many assembled together in his holy Temples are more pleasing to him, and more efficacious to draw down his Blessings upon us.

St. *Thomas* having declared his Unwillingness to believe Christ's Resurrection unless he had ocular Proofs of it, our blessed Lord, in Condescension to his Weakness, appeared again to his Disciples when our Apostle was with them, and shewing his Hands and Feet, bid him put his Finger into the Marks of the Wounds, and thrust his Hand into his Side. This cured him of his Infidelity, who cried out in Transports of Joy, ashamed of his Unbelief, *My Lord, and my God!* as if he would have said: *O my Lord!* I no longer doubt of the Truth and Reality of thy Resurrection; thou art Christ the Son of the living God. But though Jesus Christ thus condescended to the Demand of St. *Thomas*, in shewing him the Wounds in his Hands and Side, yet he reprov'd the Slowness of his believing, and commended the Faith of those who had believed without requiring any such sensible and ocular Proof. *Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed.* Here Christ gives us to understand, that we are not
to

to subject our Faith to the dim Light of human Reason, or ground it on the Testimony of our Senses, but that Reason and our Senses must be subject to Faith, which, as St. Paul tells us, is an *Argument of Things not seen.* Heb. chap. xi. ver. 1. an Assent of the Mind on the Veracity of God, who is essential Truth, and as he cannot be deceived himself, so cannot deceive us. This Faith, without which it is impossible to please God. This Assent of the Mind must be intire, believing all that he has revealed to us by his holy Word,* and by his holy Catholic Church. It will not be sufficient to believe some Points and to reject others. To do this is to believe upon our own private Judgment, and not upon divine Motives necessary to true Faith, and may be truly called Fancy, not Faith. To believe such or such an Article because we think it true, and not because God has revealed it, is to set ourselves up for Judges of Faith, and to usurp an Authority which he has not given to us. The Power of declaring what we are to believe, and what not, is given by God to his holy Catholic Church, and her Authority is the same in declaring one Point as well as another, and therefore is to be submitted to in all, to which she requires our Assent. As for what the Church proposes, we can have no just Reason to doubt, or call it into Question, since she proposes nothing but what she has God's Authority and his holy Word for, and the continual Assistance of his holy Spirit, to preserve
her

her from Falshood and Error in Matters of Faith. For this Reason Christ bids us hear the Church, and says, that whoever refuses to hear the Church, *Let him be esteemed as a Heathen and Publican.* St. *Matt.* chap. xviii. ver. 17. And that we might securely hear and submit to her, he promised her the Assistance of his holy Spirit to lead and guide her into all Truth. St. *John*, chap. xvi. ver. 13. and that he would be with her to the End of the World. St. *Matt.* chap. xxviii. ver. 20. It will not, therefore, be sufficient to believe some Articles of Faith only, and reject others, no more than to keep some of the Commandments and violate others. If we refuse to believe any Point of Faith, as such, declared by the Church guided by the Spirit of God, we incur the Guilt of Unbelievers, for to reject any one Article of Faith, is to reject the Authority of Jesus Christ, and refuse to submit to him who has said: *He that believeth not, shall be condemned.* St. *Mark*, chap. xvi. ver. 16.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O my Lord, and my God! Eternal and never-failing Truth, whose Word endures for ever! I do firmly believe in thee. I believe in thee as essentially and eternally true. I captivate my Understanding to the Obedience of Faith, and firmly believe what I do not now see. O may I come to enjoy what I now believe. My God, I
firmly

firmly believe all that thou hast revealed in thy holy Word ; all that thy holy Church requires my Assent to. I believe every Article of my Creed, and am willing to die in Defence of it. It is, by thee, O Lord, I have this Gift of Faith, increase, confirm and strengthen it. May it be always lively, vigorous, and active in the Observance of thy holy Commands, and the Practice of good Works, that I may be pleasing to thee. Cause this Light of true Faith to shine upon all Men. Illuminate all Heathens and Infidels who are ignorant of thee ; bring back into the Way of Truth all those who err and go astray from thee. May all People confess to thee, O God, let all People confess to thee ; and may all the Earth adore, and sing to the Glory of thy holy Name.

Holy Saint *Thomas*, join your powerful Intercession to my poor Prayers, that all Nations may be converted to the Knowledge of Christ, and with one Heart and with one Voice confess him to be their Lord and their God.

DECEMBER 25.

Christmas Day.

A Solemn Festival annually kept on the 25th of *December*, in Honour of the sacred Birth of Jesus Christ of his blessed Mother the Virgin *Mary*, who having conceived him by the Power and Virtue of the Holy Ghost, and carried him in her most pure and chaste Womb nine Months, brought him forth as on this Day, without any the least Detriment to her virginal Purity, becoming thereby a true Mother, yet remaining a pure and unspotted Virgin. Hence it is stiled the Birth-Day of Christ, or, the Nativity of our blessed Lord. The calling it *Christmas Day* is from the Masses being sung or said in Honour of his holy and humble Birth. This Feast is one of the most antient in the christian Church, and was always observed with very great Solemnity. The 25th of *December* is with good Reason assigned by the Church for this Festival, and believed to be the Day on which Christ was born. It was in the Month of *September*, that *Zacharias*, Father of St. *John Baptist*, had the Vision in the Temple, and that his Wife *Elizabeth* conceived the holy Precursor of Jesus. Six Months after which, the Angel *Gabriel* was sent to *Nazareth* to declare to the blessed Virgin, that she should conceive the Son of God
in

Christmas-Day. December 25. 353

in her Womb; which must have been in the Month of *March*, and consequently our Saviour's Birth nine Months afterwards, must have been in *December*. We may further observe, that the Birth of Christ was in the Beginning of that Enrollment made in *Judea* by *Quirinus*, according to the Edict published by the Emperor *Augustus*, and which Sort of public Acts being always preserved at *Rome*, with very great Care and Exactness, the Church of *Rome* might easily come to the Knowledge of the true Day of our Saviour's Nativity, and other Churches learn it from her. It is true the Oriental Churches did for some Time differ from the Practice of the Western in the Day on which they celebrated this Feast, but at length and by Degrees the *Greeks* conformed to the *Latins*, and *Christmas-Day* came to be, as now it is, universally celebrated on the 25th of *December*.

But, whatever Difference there was in the precise Day, or Time of keeping this Feast, all agreed in this, that it was a Day to be celebrated with great Solemnity and Devotion; and certainly with very great Reason. For how can we seriously consider the Mercies of this Holiday, and not have our Hearts moved, and filled with proper Sentiments of Gratitude and Acknowledgment! Let us therefore join devoutly with the Church in her solemn Offices, and with her praise and glorify God for his wonderful Goodness to us, so conspicuous in the Birth of Jesus Christ. Let us devoutly meditate on this great Mystery of divine Love, and entertain ourselves with pious Reflections

354 *Christmas-Day.* December 25.

Reflections on the wonderful Circumstances of this holy and humble Birth. These are proper Entertainments for us at this Time, and will fitly dispose us to share in the Mercies we now commemorate.

The GOSPEL. St. *Luke* chap. ii. ver. 1.

And it came to pass that in those Days there went out a Decree from *Cæsar Augustus*, that the whole World should be enrolled. 2. This Enrolling was first made by *Cyrenus* the Governor of *Syria*. 3. And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own City. 4. And *Joseph* also went up from *Galilee*, out of the City of *Nazareth* into *Judea* to the City of *David*, which is called *Bethlehem*, because he was of the House and Family of *David*. 5. To be enrolled with *Mary* his espoused Wife, who was with Child. 6. And it came to pass that when they were there, her Days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped him up in swadling Cloaths, and laid him in a Manger, because there was no Room for them in the Inn. 8. And there were in the same Country, Shepherds watching, and keeping the Night-watches over their Flock. 9. And behold an Angel of the Lord stood by them, and the Brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with great Fear. 10. And the Angel said to them : Fear not, for behold I bring good Tidings of great Joy, that shall

shall be to all People. 11. For this Day is born to you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord, in the City of *David*. 12. And this shall be a Sign to you. You shall find the Infant wrapped in swadling Cloaths, and laid in a Manger. 13. And suddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude of the heavenly Host, praising God, and saying: *Glory to God in the highest: and on Earth, Peace to Men of good Will.*

REFLECTIONS.

In this Account which the holy Evangelist gives of the Nativity of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, every Thing appears wonderful and mysterious; every Thing so surprizing that human Understanding is lost in an Abyss of Wonder and Amazement. But however wonderful and mysterious every Thing here appears, upon due Reflection we shall find every Thing equally instructive, and from each Circumstance of our Saviour's Birth we may learn many useful Lessons. The beloved Disciple St. *John*, speaking of the Goodness of God to Man, says, *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, not to judge the Wor'd, but that the World might be saved by him.* St. *John* chap. iii. ver. 17. This was the Reason why the Son of God would assume our human Nature, and be made Man like unto us in all Things, Sin only excepted. For this the divine Word descended from the Bosom of his
eternal

eternal Father, and was conceived in the most pure Womb of his blessed Mother the Virgin *Mary*, who, the Time of her Delivery being come, brought him forth, and wrapping him in swadling Cloaths, laid him in a Manger, there being no Room for her in the Inn. This is the Subject of the present grand Solemnity; and ought to fill our Hearts with Sentiments of Love and Gratitude, as well as with Wonder and Admiration. In order to this, let us now seriously consider, who is born; where he is born; and in what Manner he is born.

If we consider who is born, or whose Birth we now commemorate. It is the Son of God equal with his Father in all Things, one and the same God with him, who as God being before all Time, became Man that he might be born in Time. And though as God he always was, without Beginning and without End, yet as Man, we have a wonderful, but large and plain Account of his Nativity in the Gospel of this Day, and wherein was verified that Prophecy of *Isaias*: *Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son, and his Name shall be called Emanuel, or God with us.* *Isaias* chap. vii. ver. 14. This is he who is this Day born, and comes thus into the World that he may redeem and save it. But, where is this Saviour of the World born? When we hear of the Birth of Princes and great Men of the World, we conclude that they are born in some magnificent Palace prepared, and fitted up for them, with all the Pomp and Conveniences
suitable

suitable to such illustrious Persons. And was not Jesus Christ the Son of God, the sovereign Lord of all the World, was not he born in some sumptuous Palace? Ah no! if we go to *Bethlehem* we shall find nothing of Grandeur and Magnificence. We shall see the greatest Poverty and Indigence; a Stable, a Manger and a few swadling Cloaths, no Company but *Mary* and *Joseph*, no Attendants but an Ox and an Ass, a poor Stable open and exposed to all the Inclemencies of a cold Winter Season; a hard Manger only softened by a little Hay or Straw; poor swadling Bands, such as the Poverty of the blessed Virgin and St. *Joseph* could afford. This is the Place wherein the Saviour of the World was born, nor is the Manner of his Birth less wonderful, nor less deserves our Attention. The blessed Virgin and her Spouse St. *Joseph* went from *Nazareth* in *Galilee* to the City of *David* called *Bethlehem*! and being just arrived could find no Place to reside in, there was no Room for them in the Inn. Reduced to this Necessity, and thus rejected, the holy Virgin retired to a Stable, and there brought forth her divine Son, and laid him in a Manger. Thus the Saviour of the World comes into the World without any one taking notice of him, and exposed to all the Hardships of Want and Poverty; but at the same Time this marvellous, though humble Birth of Jesus was made known to some devout Shepherds watching over their Flocks by Night. To them an Angel of the Lord appeared, with a Multi-

353 *Christmas-Day.* December 25.

Multitude of the heavenly Host singing aloud, *Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth Peace to Men of good Will.* No wonder these poor Men were filled with Fear at this celestial Appearance, and their Hearts with Joy when the Angel told them of the Birth of their long-expected and promised Messias, and directed them to *Bethlehem*, giving them a Sign by which they might know him. *You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling Cloaths, and laid in a Manger.* What Wonders here, Christians, present themselves to our Thoughts! What Marks! what Signs to find and know the Messias! an Infant wrapped in swaddling Bands, in a Manger, in a poor Stable. What Signs these of a sovereign Monarch, of the Son of God, especially to poor Shepherds, Men of low Capacity, unable to understand or penetrate that Greatness covered with Appearances so vile and contemptible! How admirably does Jesus Christ evidence in the Manner of his Birth, the Truth of what he himself said afterwards: *I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast hidden these Things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.* St. Luke chap. x. ver. 21. The Birth of Jesus was hid from the wise and learned of the Jews, from the proud and haughty Scribes and Pharisees, and revealed to the little ones, the poor and humble Shepherds of *Bethlehem*. That Light from Heaven which surrounded them as they were watching their Flocks, enlightened their Understandings, and

and enabled them to see not only the Majesty of a God veiled under the Shade of so much Poverty, but also to comprehend the mysterious Conformity of these Signs to the Design of him whose Birth they signified. These are truly wonderful Circumstances of the Nativity of Jesus Christ, and while we admire them, let us attentively consider what, from these Particulars, we may learn, and hearken to the practical Lessons in them given to us.

The Evangelist St. *Matthew* tells us, that when our blessed Saviour had finished his divine Sermon on the Mount, the People were in Admiration at his Doctrine. St. *Matthew* chap. vii. ver. 28. Nor does he preach less admirably to us in the Stable of *Bethlehem*. Lying in his Crib he preaches to us, in the best of Methods by his own Example, the necessary Doctrines of Humility, Patience, Love of Poverty, and Contempt of worldly Riches and Glory, here it is that he says : *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of Heart.* St. *Matthew* chap. xi. ver. 29. What Christian is there who can refuse to be so, when he sees the Son of God thus humbling himself to so poor, so low a Condition ? Who can be proud and haughty, beholding *Jesus Christ* the Son of God in a Stable ? Christians ! you who desire to be Christians indeed, true Disciples of Jesus Christ, learn here that to be so, you must be humble, and patiently submit to all the Dispensations of God's Providence. Learn from Christ in the Manger not to value yourselves

360 *Christmas-Day.* December 25.

upon, nor eagerly to seek after the vain Grands of this World. Learn you who are rich not to pride yourselves in your Riches, nor to set your Hearts upon Wealth and Abundance. Learn also, you who are poor, and in a low State, to be patient and content, to suit your Minds and Desires to your Condition, and let the Manger of Jesus Christ render your poor Accommodations agreeable and easy. Poverty accompanied with Virtue and Piety is dear in the Sight of God, and the Way is easy and short from a Cottage on Earth, to a Throne in Heaven. Easier far than from a Palace here to a Crown there. The Angel told the Shepherds that he brought them Tidings of great Joy, and not only to them but to every one, to the Poor and to the Rich. Rejoice then, O ye Poor and Needy, rejoice in the Birth of Christ, and sanctify your Poverty by uniting it to his, and let your poor Habitations put you in mind of the Stable wherein Christ was born. Rejoice likewise O ye Rich, since you may be poor in Spirit, and thereby share with Jesus in his Poverty. Be thankful to God for his Liberality to you, and beholding your own fine Houses and comfortable Dwelling Places, be grateful to him who has so plentifully provided for you, while he chose to want himself, and be willing to relieve Jesus Christ in his Poverty, by helping and assisting his poor Members, and remember that he has said, whatever we do to the Poor we do to him. May every one learn from this Day's Festival that the Spirit of a Christian

Christian is Humility, Poverty of Spirit, Meekness and Self-denial; and if we are careful to observe these Lessons, and to regulate our Lives by these Precepts, then we may truly rejoice in the Nativity of Christ, then will he be a Saviour to us here, and we shall reign with him in Glory hereafter.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus, my dear Redeemer! I adore thee lying in a Manger, suffering all this Poverty and Hardship. I adore thee with Transports of Love and Admiration. O divine Infant! O that I was all inflamed with that ardent Love and burning Charity which brought thee down from Heaven to Earth! Hail, sweet Jesus, Praise, Honour and Glory be to thee, O Christ, who didst not refuse to be born in the cold Season of the Year, to be laid in a Manger, and to be wrapped in poor swadling Cloaths. I adore thee sweet Saviour of the World, King of Heaven and Earth. All hail most beautiful and charming Infant! most high God! Hail, Prince of Peace, Light of the Gentiles, and desired Saviour of the World! Grant that I may be poor in Spirit, that I may be truly humble, and patiently bear all Hardships and Sufferings for Love of thee.

Beholding the extreme Poverty and Hardship which thou didst suffer, and in which, O Jesus, thou wast born, shall I not be content, and even desirous to suffer something for thy

362 *Christmas-Day.* December 25.

Sake? Yes, my adorable Saviour, I will be content with whatever happens to me. I will patiently suffer all Hardships, and be easy under the narrowest Circumstances. I resign myself to all the Difficulties of Poverty and Want, and am content to suffer the greatest Necessity, if it be thy holy Will to reduce me to it. If thy Providence, my God, gives me a Competency, I will be thankful; and if thou shalt please to bless me with Affluence, I will make a good Use of it, and be charitable to the poor, and relieve those who are in Want. My Heart shall not be set upon any Thing in this World, but upon thee alone, my God. May I die to the World, and live only to thee! May I love thee, and sweetly lose myself in the Contemplation of thy Love! O my dearest Jesus, may I cease to live, when I cease to love thee, and may I cease to be at all, when I cease to be all thine!

DECEMBER

DECEMBER 26.

St. STEPHEN. Proto-Martyr.

THIS illustrious Saint was the first who shed his Blood in Defence of the christian Faith, and by dying for the Profession of Christ's being the Son of God, obtained a glorious Crown of Martyrdom signified by his Name *Stephen*. The History of which is recorded, with the Occasion and Circumstances of it, by *St. Luke*, in the 6th and 7th Chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. After the Descent of the Holy Ghost the Number of the Faithful or Believers daily increased by the Conversions which were made in *Jerusalem*, and gave Rise to a severe Persecution by which the Devil in vain attempted to crush the Gospel, and to stifle it in its Infancy. The Multitudes of Believers caused some Dissension, wherein the *Greeks* or *Hellenists* murmured against the *Hebrews*, and the Apostles thought it necessary to stop the Disputes before they went too far. The Occasion was, the *Greeks*, that is, such Jews who had not been born in *Judea*, though they resided in *Jerusalem*, but in other Places where the *Greek* Tongue was spoke, who were born of *Jewish* Parents, and on that Account were stiled *Greeks*, or as some translate it *Hellenists*, complained that their Widows were despised, or less regarded and favoured

in the daily Distribution of the Alms, out of which, as a common Stock, the Faithful were maintained, than the *Hebrews*, those who were born in *Palestine*, and spoke, not *Greek*, but *Syriack*, the Language then of the Jews. To put an End to the Dissention, and to take away all Cause of Complaint, seven Persons full of the Holy Ghost and of unblemished Characters were chosen and appointed to superintend and take Care of those Distributions, and to see that every one was equally served according to his Necessity. Their Names were *Stephen*, *Philip*, *Prochorus*, *Nicanor*, *Timon*, *Parmenas* and *Nicholas* a Profelyte of *Antioch*. These being presented to the Apostles, were by them appointed to this Office and ordained Deacons by Imposition of Hands.

St. *Stephen*, the first of these holy Deacons, being full of the Holy Ghost, and zealous for the Conversion of the Jews, to the Care he had of the poor, joined his Labours in Defence of the Gospel preached by the Apostles. This, seconded by the many Miracles he daily wrought, brought upon him a particular Hatred and Resentment of the Jews, who endeavoured at first to silence him by disputing, having for that End called together some of their ablest Men from the Synagogues of the Libertines, that is, of those whose Fathers had been made Slaves under *Pompey* and the *Romans*, but who had been restored again to their Liberty, and been made free. To these were joined
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some of the Synagogue or College of the Jews of *Cyrene*, of those of *Alexandria*, *Cilicia* and of *Asia*. These attempted to hold a Disputation with St. *Stephen*, in Defence of the *Mosaic* Law, and against the Gospel, but being clearly confuted by him, and not able to resist the Wisdom and Spirit with which he spoke, the Shame of their Defeat filled them with Rage and Fury, and made them resolve to accomplish that by false Accusations which they could not obtain by Force of Argument: For this End, laying violent Hands upon him, they dragged him before the High-priest and great Council, and there accused him by false Witnesses got for that Purpose, that he had spoken Blasphemy against the Law of *Moses*. The holy Deacon full of Courage and the Spirit of God, appeared not at all concerned at the Charge, but stood before the Sanhedrim with a Countenance like that of an Angel, and being asked by the High-priest concerning what he was accused of, made a long and eloquent Discourse concerning the Law given to *Moses*, which he finished with a zealous Inveective against that Obstinacy with which they resisted the Holy Ghost, and persecuted those who told them the Truth. This increased the Rage of his Enemies, who being cut to the Heart, gnashed at him with their Teeth, while he, lifting up his Eyes to Heaven, saw the Glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right Hand of God. This Vision filled him with inexpressible Joy, and unable to contain himself: he cried

out : *Behold I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right Hand of God.* Acts chap. vii. ver. 55. The Jews redoubled their Fury at this, and stopping their Ears, rushed upon him, and violently dragged him out of the City, where the false Witnesses who had deposed against him, stripped themselves of their Cloaths which they laid at the Feet of a young Man whose Name was *Sau'*, and then finished the Martyrdom of the admirable Deacon, by stoning him to Death. The holy Martyr with Joy received the Stones which were flung at him, and commending his Spirit to *Jelus Christ*, after the Example of his divine Master, expired, praying for his cruel Enemies ; for kneeling down he cried out with a loud Voice saying : *Lord, lay not this Sin to their Charge.* And when he had said this he fell asleep in the Lord ; that is, in the Scripture Stile, died a Death precious in the Sight of God : And the first Effect of his dying Prayer was the Conversion of *St. Paul*. The Body of *St. Stephen* was by some devout Men interred near *Jerusalem*, mourning and weeping over this glorious Proto-Martyr, who was the first that died for the Sake of Christ.

His Feast is of early Date in the Church, and his Memory began soon to be honoured, particularly at *Jerusalem*, from whence it was propagated to other Churches, till it became universal. Mention is made of it in the apostolic Constitutions which say that after the Feasts of our Lord we are to celebrate those of the Apostles,

Apostles, and that of St. *Stephen*, whose Festival seems nevertheless not to have become universal till about the Beginning of the fifth Age, and upon Account of the Invention or Finding of his Body, which was in the Year 415, in the Time of the Emperor *Honorius*, when a holy Priest named *Lucian* discovered the sacred Relics by a Revelation from Heaven; upon which they were translated with great Solemnity to the Church on Mount *Sion* in *Jerusalem* on the 26th of *December*, which was then fixed for the Day of his Festival. Afterwards, in the Reign of *Theodosius* the younger, the holy Body was translated to *Constantinople*, and from thence to *Rome*, in the Time of Pope *Pelagius* the first who died in the Year 560, on the 3d of *August*, which Translation the Church celebrates under the Title of the Invention of St. *Stephen*; for at that Time, says Father *Thomasin*, no Distinction was made between the Invention or Finding, and the Translation of holy Relics. S. *Augustin* in his Book of the City of God, *Lib. 22. C. 8.* makes mention of many wonderful and undeniable Miracles which were wrought in the Translation of the Relics of St. *Stephen*, and that an authentic Account of them used to be read in the Churches to the People. An unanswerable Proof and Justification of that Honour the Church pays to the sacred Remains of the holy Martyrs and Saints, and proves also the Lawfulness and Utility of begging their Intercession and Prayers, that we may obtain Grace to imitate their Cou-

368 St. STEPHEN. December 26.

rage and Zeal for the Glory of God, and in Defence of our Christian Catholic Faith. This is what the Church proposes in the present Festival of *St. Stephen*, from whose Example we may also learn the great Duty of forgiving and praying for our Enemies, as he did, and therein to imitate our blessed Saviour who thus prayed for his Crucifiers: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* St. Luke, chap. xxiii. ver. 34.

The GOSPEL. St. *Matt.* chap. xxiii. ver. 34.

'Therefore behold I send to you Prophets, and wise Men and Scribes: Some of them you will put to Death and crucify, and some you will scourge in your Synagogues, and persecute from City to City. 35. That upon you may come all the Just Blood that hath been shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of *Abel* the just, even unto the Blood of *Zacharias* the Son of *Barachias*, whom you killed between the Temple and the Altar. 36. Amen, I say to you, all these Things shall come upon this Generation. 37. *Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, thou that killest the Prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy Children as the Hen doth gather her Chickens under her Wings, and thou wouldst not? 38. Behold, your House shall be left to you desolate. 39. For I say unto you, you shall not see me henceforth, till
you

you say: Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

It is a severe Reproach Christ makes to the Jews in this Gospel. He tells them of their Obstinacy and Infidelity; of their continual revolting against God, and their unworthy Treatment of his Servants and Prophets whom he had sent to call them to Repentance, some of whom they killed, some they crucified, and others they persecuted from City to City: He told them they were wicked Children of as wicked Parents, who, to fill up the Measure of their Iniquities, were then contriving, and had resolved to put him to Death who was their Messias, and the Lord of those Prophets he had sent, and whom they so outrageously treated. The Event shewed how just these Reproaches were. The Jews having crucified our Saviour, soon after persecuted with equal Cruelty the Apostles and Disciples, whom they scourged in their Synagogues, killed both the St. James's, stoned St. Stephen, crucified St. Simeon, Son of Cleophas and second Bishop of Jerusalem, and put many others of the Faithful to death. This Obstinacy in their Malice and Infidelity drew upon them the severe Vengeance of almighty God, and from hence we may learn how terrible a Thing it is to resist the holy Spirit, and to be deaf to the Calls and Invitations of Grace. Our blessed Lord expressed
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in the most tender Manner the ardent Desire he had to save them, but they would not hearken to him. *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered together thy Children as the Hen doth gather her Chickens under her Wings, and thou wouldst not.* This Reproach to the Jews may, it is to be feared, be made to many Christians, who act in a great Measure as the Jews did. God often calls upon them to repent and be saved, he sends the Ministers of his Word to invite them to Repentance and Amendment of Life, but in vain. They neglect the Calls of God, slight and contemn his Ministers, and oftentimes treat them ill for their Charity and Zeal. Thus they, imitating the Jews, and sharing with them in their Guilt, have Reason to fear they shall share in their Punishment also.

The Punishment Christ threatened the Jews with, was the utter Ruin of their Temple, and Destruction of their City, which he said should come upon them for their Wickedness ; and because they would not know the Day of their Visitation in Mercy, when he came to save them, they should feel the Day of their Visitation in Justice when he would punish them. The Jews were once the favourite Nation of God, and his peculiar beloved People, and remained so while they continued obedient to him : but when to their frequent Rebellions against him, they added new Crimes and compleated their Malice by rejecting Jesus Christ, crucifying him, and persecuting his Disciples, he abandoned them to the Severity of
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of that divine Justice which overtook them in the Ruin of their City, the burning of their Temple, and their Dispersion over all the World, in which sad Condition they are at this Day, a miserable Race, and a lasting Monument of this Justice upon them. The Law of *Moses* has been long since abrogated. Instead of one peculiar Nation, as the Jews, now Christians of all Nations, professing the true Catholic Faith, are his chosen People. But what has happened to the Jews has likewise in a great Measure been the sad Case of many, once Christian Kingdoms and States, the mournful Lot of many, once flourishing Churches, whose Candlesticks have been removed and Light extinguished by the just Judgments of God, and in Punishment of their Wickedness and Transgression of his Gospel Precepts. The same may be said and applied to particular Persons, all Sinners whom God has long and often called upon to repent and amend their Lives. He demonstrates, many Ways, his tender Compassion for them, and earnestly desires to gather them to himself. But all those who refuse to hearken to his gracious Call and will not comply, must expect the severe Effects of his Justice, which will revenge the Abuse of his Mercy. The Time will come when their Houses shall be left desolate, when their Souls shall be separated from their Bodies. Then shall the Guilt of all their past Crimes flow in upon them, and overwhelm them with Horror and Confusion. Sinners may here sport
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372 **St. STEPHEN.** December 26.

and please themselves in the seeming delightful broad Way of worldly and sinful Pleasures, but alas ! the End of this Way is Death. *O, that Men were wise, and would consider !* Deut. chap. xxxii. ver. 29. That they would consider these Things and provide against them in Time, and before it is too late. For *now is the acceptable Time, now is the Day of Salvation.* 2. Cor. chap. vi. ver. 2. Now let us hear his Voice calling upon and inviting us, and not harden our Hearts, and thereby treasure up to ourselves *Wrath in the Day of Wrath.* Rom. chap. ii. ver. 5. But as St. Peter exhorts, endeavour *by good Works to make our Calling and Election sure.* 2. St. Peter, chap. i. ver. 10.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

How kind is Jesus our dear Redeemer ! how tender of us, and desirous we should be happy ! He calls upon us, and desires to gather us to himself. But alas ! too like the obstinate Jews, we will not. We let ourselves be deceived by the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and refuse the kind Invitations of our merciful Saviour. Blind and ungrateful as we are ! We slight the Mercies of God, and provoke his Justice to take Vengeance upon us, which we shall most certainly one Day feel, if we go on in a Course of Sin and Folly, Ah my Soul ! Let us not be guilty of this Folly. Let us no longer refuse to hearken to the Calls
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of our merciful Redeemer. The Time will come when our House will be laid desolate at the End of our Life. Shall we not then provide in Time, and prevent our sharing in that Horror and Confusion which will seize all Sinners at that dreadful Period of Time, which to such will be the Beginning of an endless miserable Eternity? O my God! my adorable Saviour! permit me not to fall into this sad Calamity. May that Goodness thou hast hitherto shewed me meet with a suitable Return from me! may my Heart be moved with so much Love and Bounty, and may all my Endeavours be to love and serve thee as I ought.

O glorious Proto-Martyr, *St. Stephen*, help me by your Prayers, obtain for me, by your holy Intercession, that while I honour your sacred Memory, I may imitate your holy Example upon Earth, and be happy with you in Heaven.

D E C E M B E R 27.

St. JOHN, the Evangelist.

HE was born in *Bethsaida* of *Galilee*, was the Son of *Zebedee*, and Brother to *St. James* the greater. He was called with his Brother by our blessed Saviour, and was the youngest of all the Apostles, but honoured by Christ with such a peculiar Affection as to be called the Disciple whom Jesus loved. It appears from the holy Gospels that our blessed Saviour, on several Occasions, gave him Proofs of a tender and special Affection, as being one of the three who were chosen to be present at our Lord's Transfiguration, and when he raised to Life the Daughter of *Iairus*, and at his Agony in the Garden. At the last Supper *St. John* was privileged to lay on our Saviour's Breast, and *St. Peter* desirous to know, but not daring to ask our blessed Lord, who it was that should betray him, made a Sign to *St. John*, who immediately asking, Christ replied: *He it is to whom I shall reach Bread dipped.* *St. John*, chap. xiii. ver. 26. That which procured this Evangelist such a particular Love and Affection from Jesus Christ was, according to *St. Jerome*, and other holy Fathers, his perpetual Virginity, and to him Christ dying on the Cross, committed the Care of the blessed Virgin. To these Marks of a peculiar Affection

St.

St. *John* returned an ardent Zeal and constant Love for his divine Master In regard of his Zeal, our Saviour named him *Boanerges*, a Son of Thunder. St. *Mark*, chap. iii. ver. 17. This Zeal St. *John* shewed both before and after our Saviour's Passion. As when our blessed Lord going up to *Jerusalem* would have lodged in a City of the *Samaritans*, but they refused to receive him because he was going to *Jerusalem*. This Affront to Christ the zealous St. *John*, with his Brother St. *James*, desired to punish by calling Fire from Heaven to consume them. St. *Luke*, chap. ix. ver. 54. But our Saviour reprov'd their intemperate Zeal by telling those two Apostles, that he came not to destroy but save Souls. The Courage and Zeal of St. *John* further shewed themselves in that, when Jesus Christ was seized, though at first he fled away with the rest of the Apostles, yet recovering himself, he went into the High-Priest's Palace, and afterwards stood by the Cross in the Time of his Crucifixion, and then took the blessed Virgin to his own Home; and after Christ's Resurrection, when St. *Mary Magdalen* had told the Apostles that the Lord was risen, he immediately ran to the Monument; and when Christ appeared to his Disciples as they were Fishing in the Lake of *Tiberias*, St. *John* was the first that knew him, and said to St. *Peter*, *It is the Lord*. St. *John*, chap. xxi. ver. 17.

But after the Descent of the Holy Ghost, his Courage and Zeal appeared in a more conspicuous

spicuous Manner, when being called before the High-Priest and his Council, on account of the lame Man cured by St. *Peter*, and being first threatened and then scourged for preaching the Name of Jesus, so far from being intimidated that he returned from the Council rejoicing that he had suffered for the Sake of Christ. The *Samaritans* having embraced the Faith of Jesus Christ, St. *John* went with St. *Peter* to confirm those new Converts, and to lay Hands upon them, and afterwards assisted at the apostolic Council in *Jerusalem*. To him St. *Paul* paid a Visit after his miraculous Conversion, esteeming him as one of the Pillars of the Church. When the Apostles left *Jerusalem* and separated in order to preach the Gospel in all Parts of the World, St. *John* went into lesser *Asia*, where he founded, and governed the Churches there with a Care and Zeal worthy of the beloved Disciple of Christ, till the cruel Persecution of the Christians under the Emperor *Domitian*, whose Proconsul of *Achaia* sent the Apostle bound to *Rome*, where the barbarous Emperor ordered him to be cast into a Cauldron of boiling Oil. But the same divine Power which preserved the three Children in the fiery Furnace, preserved the Evangelist from being hurt by the boiling Oil, and he came out of the Cauldron fresher and stronger than when he was cast in. On which Account he is honoured by the Church as a Martyr, having thus exposed his Life for the Faith of Christ, and this his miraculous Deliverance is annually commemorated

memorated on the 6th of *May*. This signal Interposition of the Power of God in Behalf of the holy Evangelist had no other Effect on the Emperor than to increase his Rage against St. *John*, whom he immediately banished to *Patmos* a small barren Island of the *Sporades*, where having converted many of the Inhabitants, he had those extraordinary Revelations which he writ down, and are contained in that Part of the holy Scripture which from thence is called the Apocalypse or Revelations.

The Apostle having remained some Years in *Patmos*, the Persecution against the Christians ceased by the Death of *Domitian*, who was stabbed by one of the Officers of his Household in the 45th Year of his Age, and all his Acts being recalled and annulled by the Senate, St. *John* returned to *Ephesus* under the Reign of *Nerva* a mild Prince; and when Weakness and old Age had rendered him incapable to make long Discourses, he would be carried by his Disciples to the Church, where he said nothing to them but, *My little Children, love one another*. They being tired with the frequent Repetition of the same Thing, asked him why he always said that to them, to whom he gave this Answer worthy of himself, *It is the Lord's Command, and the keeping it is enough*. St. *John* outlived all the other Apostles, and survived the total Destruction of the Jews, and their Temple at *Jerusalem*, and died in the 68th after our Saviour's Crucifixion, and was buried at *Ephesus*. His Zeal was remarkable against
Heretics,

Heretics, who, in those early Times began to adulterate the Truths of the Gospel by their impious Doctrines, especially *Cerintus* and *Ebion*, the former of whom finding accidentally in a Bath wherein he was going to bathe, he immediately retired, nor would enter in, for fear, as he said to his Followers, the House should fall upon their Heads. This Behaviour to Heretics was conformable to the Doctrine he taught in his Epistles, 'in the second of which he earnestly exhorts the holy Lady *Electa* to have an Abhorrence of false Teachers and Seducers. At the Request of the Bishops of *Asia* he writ his Gospel, being then ninety Years of Age, wherein he asserts the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and that he was the Son of God, against the *Cerinthians* and *Ebionites* who maintained that Christ was only Man, and broached many other detestable Impieties. He writ this Gospel in *Greek*, and by the Loftiness of his Style, soaring above all created Beings, aims to arrive at God himself, and is compared to an Eagle, and by Way of Eminence is also called the **DIVINE**.

The GOSPEL. St. *John*, chap. xxi. ver. 20.

At that Time *Peter* turning about, saw that Disciple whom Jesus loved, following, who also leaned on his Breast at Supper, and said, Lord, who is he that shall betray thee? 21. Him therefore, when *Peter* had seen, he saith to Jesus: Lord, and what shall this Man do?

22. Jesus

22. Jesus saith to him: So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? follow thou me. 23. This Saying, therefore, went abroad among the Brethren, that that Disciple should not die. And Jesus did not say to him, he should not die; but so I will have him to remain till I come, what is that to thee? 24. This is that Disciple who giveth Testimony of these Things, and hath written those Things: And we know that his Testimony is true.

REFLECTIONS.

In the Question which *St. Peter* put to our blessed Lord concerning *St. John*, we may observe a Sollicitude and Concern, which, though it might proceed from the Love and Regard he had for his Fellow Disciple, yet our Saviour thought fit to reprehend in the Prince of the Apostles, and without satisfying his seeming Curiosity, bid him follow him, telling him it did not concern him what *St. John* was to do. In this Answer of Christ to *St. Peter*, we have this very useful and instructive Lesson, namely, to attend to ourselves and our own proper Business, and not out of Curiosity, or a meddling Temper, trouble ourselves with or interfere with the Concerns of others, and what they are and ought to do, where no necessary Connection with others and the Charge we may have over them does not require it and make it our Duty; or where true disinterested Charity does not move us to shew a right Concern for them. Exclusive

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of these Cases, to neglect our own Affairs and to interfere with and to direct those of others no ways relating to us, is generally the Effect of Pride, and a too good Opinion we have of ourselves, and our own Judgment, or of a culpable Curiosity desirous to know, and to be let into the Affairs of our Neighbours. There are but too many of these busy, meddling, and curious People in the World, who thereby oftentimes prejudice themselves as well as others. The Duty of a Christian, in the first Place, is to take care of himself and his own Affairs, and in this every one will find enough to do, and thereby to follow Christ in the Way to which he is called. All are not called to follow Christ the same Way, nor to one and the same State or Condition of Life. Our Business then is to consider ourselves with regard to that particular State Providence has placed us in, and what are our particular Duties in such Circumstances. Magistrates and those in public Offices, are to consider and attend to what such Offices require of them. The Ecclesiastic his Duty as a Churchman. Merchants, Tradesmen and Artificers the Obligations incumbent on them as such. The particular Duties of some no ways regard others. Hence the Advice of St. Paul, *Let every Man abide in the same Calling in which he was called.* 1. Cor. chap. vii. ver. 20.

We may further consider these Words of our blessed Saviour to St. Peter: *Follow me*, as applicable to every one in general of all Ranks and Stations, and containing likewise the general

neral Duties of every Christian: And not only to St. *Peter*, but to every one Christ says: *Follow me.* We then follow him when we hearken to his Doctrine, obey his Commands and imitate his Example. We follow him when we endeavour to know his Will, and observe his Orders, when we avoid whatever displeases him, and when our Lives and Conversations are suitable to the Character we bear of Christians. To follow him is to let the Precepts of his Gospel we profess to believe, be the only Rule of our Conduct. From hence we may know how much we deceive ourselves, if we think it sufficient to say we follow Christ because we profess to believe in him, and are called by his Name, but take no Care to live as becomes his Disciples. For it is evident, that to follow Christ as we ought, we must do the Will of God in all Things: For not the bare nominal but the true practical Christian is he, and he alone, who can have any reasonable Hopes of Heaven and Happiness. This deserves to be considered as a Point of too great Importance to be slightly passed over, since the Consequences will be very fatal to those who neglect it. Let us resolve therefore, to comply with our Duty, and by our Actions shew we do follow Christ, and are his true Disciples.

The greatest and best Proof we can give of this is to have a due Regard to that great Command, to love God with all our Heart, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength, and to love our Neighbour as ourselves. This is the principal

principal Part of our Duty, and on these two Precepts depend the whole Law and the Prophets, as Christ himself assures us. Hence St. Paul tells us, that *Love is the fulfilling of the Law.* Rom. chap. xiii. ver. 8. Our blessed Saviour after his Resurrection, asked St. Peter if he loved him: to whom the Apostle replied: *Lord thou knowest that I love thee.* St. John chap. xxi. ver. 15. For this, Christ gave him the Charge of all his Flock, and bid him feed his Sheep and his Lambs. The singular Favours bestowed upon St. John were in Consequence of the great Love he had for Jesus Christ, and for which he gained the Title of *the Disciple whom Jesus loved.* And as it is by loving God and our Neighbour that we manifest ourselves true Followers of Christ, we must further consider that this Love of God does not consist in Words only, or saying we love God; it must be in, and from the Heart, and is then shewn, when we let him be the entire Master of our Affections, when we love him above all other Things, and all other Things only in him and for him. This Love of God will inspire us with the Love of our Neighbour, as bearing the Image of God; and to love him as ourselves, that is, sincerely wishing and endeavouring to procure him all Manner of Good. He who thus loves his Neighbour is a true Disciple of Christ, and as he shews that he loves God, he will be loved by him: And it is to deceive ourselves to say we love God, if we do not love our Neighbour. *If any*

any Man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar. For he that loveth not his Brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not? And this Commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his Brother. 1 St. John, chap iv. ver. 20, 21.

This is what the Apostle of Love tells us, and who then can pretend to love God, if he bears any Malice or Hatred to his Neighbour, or wrongs and injures him, or who refuses to help and assist him when it is in his Power to do it? This is to be seriously considered, and the more so, because but too many are apt to deceive themselves in this Point, and to say and think they love God, and yet have little or no Love for their Neighbour. This Lesson of Love God teaches. This Lesson the Church reads to us on this Feast of the beloved Disciple. Let us carefully practise it, and love, not in Words only but in Deeds. Let us love God above all Things. Let us sincerely love one another, that we may be loved by God, and be pleasing to him.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Fountain of divine Love! blessed Jesus!
 may I for ever love thee with all my Heart and
 with all my Soul! Thou only art worthy of
 my Love, and may my Affections never be
 placed upon any Creature but in thee and for
 thee! O that I could love thee as I ought, and
 as thou deservest, with an infinite Love! Dear

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Jesus,

Jefus, the defired Object of my Wifhes, come, and communicate thyfelf to me. O that I was abforbed in the bottomlefs Ocean of thy Love! Ah! when, dear Lord, fhall I truly contemn and defpife all Things for the Love of thee? O thou only Happinefs and true Life of my Soul! Pierce my Heart, and inflame it with a pure and ardent Love of thee.

Thou haft commanded me, O my God, to love my Neighbour as myfelf. I give thee Thanks for this holy and fweet Command. I will love my Neighbour for thy Sake, and becaufe thou doft love him, and will do him all the Good I can for Love of thee. Thou art O Lord, thyfelf the Pattern of that Love we ought to have for one another. Thou haft told us by the Apoftle of Love, that he who remains in Love dwelleth in thee, and thou in him. O come then, fweet Lord of Love, and fill our Souls with Love! Be thou thyfelf thofe amiable and brilliant Chains of Love and Charity by which we may be infeparably united to thee and to one another.

And thou, holy Difciple of Love, beloved St. *John*, pray for me, that I may truly Love God and my Neighbour likewise: That the Flames of pure Love and holy Affections may burn in my Breaf as they did in your's, that loving God, I may be loved by him, and that nothing may ever feparate me from his Love.

DECEMBER 28.

Holy Innocents.

THIS Day is sacred to the Memory of those young Children whom King *Herod* commanded to be put to death soon after the Birth of Jesus Christ, in Hopes, with them, to have destroyed our blessed Saviour, and on this Account it is stiled the Feast of the Holy Innocents. It is a Feast very antient in the Church, and observed in a different Manner from other Festivals. On this Day the Ornaments of the Church are Purple, which is her Mourning, whereby she expresses her Sorrow and Concern for the barbarous Murder of so many helpless, innocent Infants, and omits the *Gloria in excelsis*, and *Alleluja* at Mass, and the *Te Deum* in her Office. But on the octave Day, Red, the Colour for Martyrs is used, *Gloria in excelsis*, and *Alleluja* and *Te Deum* are said to give God thanks for the Glory of these Infant Martyrs.

A particular Account of their Martyrdom, and being sacrificed to the Jealousy of a barbarous Prince, we may read in the Gospel of St. *Matthew*, which informs us that soon after the Birth of Christ, and probably after his Presentation in the Temple, wise Men came from the East to *Jerusalem*, and enquired after him who was born King of the Jews. The News

of a new-born Prince exceedingly troubled *Herod* the *Idumean*, who then as King, reigned in *Jerusalem*. To rid himself of his Fears, the impious Monarch had recourse to a politic Stratagem. He consulted the chief Priests and Scribes to know where, according to the Prophets, the *Messias* was to be born; and being told by them in *Bethlehem* of *Juda*, he sends the wise Men to *Bethlehem* to seek out the young Child, desiring that when they had found him they would return and let him know, that he might go, as he pretended, to adore him, but with a Design to make him away, and thereby to secure his Crown from any Danger of a Rival. This was *Herod's* crafty Contrivance; but vain and insignificant are the Power and Policy of Men against the Decrees of God. The wise Men found the holy Infant *Jesus*, and having adored him, being warned by God in their Sleep not to return to *Herod*, went back into their own Country another Way.

The Jewish Monarch thus disappointed, turned his secret Hypocrisy into open Fury, and discharged it upon many for the Sake of one, by giving Orders to have all the male Children put to death in *Bethlehem* and the Confines thereof, from two Years old and under, hoping by that Means to destroy the Child *Jesus* with the rest. This cruel Order was executed with the greatest Severity and Strictness, not one of those innocent Babes escaped, except the divine Infant, the principal Object of *Herod's* Jealousy.

lousy. As his Hour was not yet come, and he was to lose his Life in another Manner for the Redemption of Mankind, Providence prevented the impious Prince from succeeding in his Design against him. An Angel of the Lord appeared to St. *Joseph*, after the Departure of the wise Men, and bid him take the young Child and his Mother, and fly into *Egypt*, and remain there till he should bring him Word to return again. By this timely Flight the holy Family was preserved, *Herod's* cruel Intentions were frustrated, and the holy Jesus was secured from his Malice and Power.

The GOSPEL. St. *Matt.* chap. ii. ver. 13.

Behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in Sleep to *Joseph*, saying: Arise and take the Child and his Mother, and fly into *Egypt*; and be there until I shall tell thee; for it will come to pass that *Herod* will seek the Child to destroy him. 14. Who arose and took the Child, and his Mother by Night, and retired into *Egypt*: And he was there until the Death of *Herod*. 15 That it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the Prophet, saying: Out of *Egypt* have I called my Son. 16. Then *Herod* perceiving that he was deluded by the wise-Men, was exceeding angry; and sending, killed all the male Children that were in *Bethlehem*, and in all the Borders thereof from two Years old and under, according to the Time

which he had diligently enquired of the wise Men. 17. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by *Jeremias* the Prophet, saying: 18. A Voice in *Rama* was heard, Lamentation and great Mourning: *Rachel* bewailing her Children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

The Gospel of this Day presents us with a very mournful and lugubrious Spectacle, a dreadful Scene horrible with Blood and Slaughter, yet very instructive. We may here behold Thousands of Innocents and helpless Babes wallowing in their own Gore, and bereft of Life almost as soon as they enjoyed it. To represent to ourselves this tragical Accident must fill us with the tenderest Sentiments of Pity and Compassion for these lovely innocent Victims thus sacrificed to the furious Jealousy of a merciless Tyrant. If we consider this horrid Massacre as the Consequence of *Herod's* Rage and Cruelty, we therein behold the dismal Effects of Jealousy and Malice armed with Power. This wicked Prince enraged at his Disappointment, and for not having succeeded in his first Design upon our Saviour's Life, executes that upon thousands which he could not do upon one whom he hoped to involve in this general Slaughter. Instead of making a good Use he had of the happy Opportunity of knowing the promised *Messias*, who came
not

not to take his Temporal Crown from him, but rather to give him an eternal one, out of a vain Fear and Solitude to preserve the former he lost the latter, and to his Hypocrisy and Dissimulation added the barbarous Murder of so many innocent Children. Thus wilful and obstinate Sinners become oftentimes more hardened in their Wickedness by a wilful Neglect of God's Grace, and the favourable Opportunities given them of Repentance and Amendment, adding one Sin to another, till they become ripe for Justice, and fall Victims to God's Wrath, for ever to groan under the Weight of his Justice, after having wilfully contemned and abused his Mercy. O that Sinners would seriously reflect upon this, and not continue to shew themselves so many *Herods* persecuting Jesus Christ by their Sins, and seeking as it were to destroy him: All who are thus guilty of *Herod's* Crimes by abandoning themselves to Anger, Malice, and Hatred, Jealousy Hypocrisy and Dissimulation, must expect to share in his Punishment.

But *Herod's* Crime, his Sin in murdering so many innocent Children, is particularly to be considered by those who are Parents, and who have Children, for tho' it may seem harsh to say that many Parents prove cruel *Herods* to their Children; yet it may be said with Truth and Justice, that they are unhappy Murderers of them, not as to their Bodies, or by taking away their Lives, but by destroying their Souls and being the Cause of their external Loss, by the

bad Education they give them, and the bad Example they set them. For their Education, taking no Care to bring them up in the true Fear of God, in the Knowledge of their Duty and Principles of Religion; never correcting or curbing their growing Passions, but indulging them in every Thing in a too early Fondness for Pride and Vanity, gay and idle Amusements; permitting them be headstrong and stubborn, and consequently disobedient; who thereby prove too often a long Subject of Sorrow and Grief to their Parents, God permitting it as a just Punishment on such Parents for not taking care to give them a right and Christian Education: And the many Follies, Faults and Misfortunes of young People may justly and in a general Way be laid to the Parents Charge, for not being solicitous as they ought, to educate their Children according to the Maxims of true Virtue and Piety. If, for Want of this they come to lose their Souls, Parents will have a dismal Account to give: As also for any bad Example they set them, and by which they may be encouraged in a sinful Life. For if the Father curses and swears, gets often drunk, falls into Passion and Fury upon all Occasions; can he wonder if his Son does the same? If the Mother minds nothing but Vanity and Dress, the sinful Modes and Customs of the World, will not the Daughter be easily led away by the same Desires? If Parents neglect Prayer, going to the Sacraments, and all the serious Duties of Religion; where shall

shall Children learn Piety and Devotion? How can it be expected they should much mind what they see their Parents so much neglect? Terrible Effects of bad example which thus evidently tends to the Ruin of young Souls, lost by the Means of their own Parents, who, *Herod* like, or more truly, worse than he, become the unhappy Murderers of their own Childrens Souls. Christian Parents! consider this well, and let Love for your Children make you very careful to educate them as you ought, that you may not have their Souls to answer for. You, who are so seemingly fond of your Children, and are so sollicitous and anxious to provide well for them in this World, do not neglect what is necessary for their future Happiness. Nature prompts you to take care of their Bodies, and let Grace put you upon using an equal Care for the good of their Souls; that while you educate and bring them up for this World, you may also bring them up and educate them for Heaven.

Another useful Instruction may be drawn from what is related in this Day's Gospel, concerning the Murder of these holy Innocents, and we are therein taught to adore the Decrees of God in all the Dispensations of his Providence. They were taken out of the World in their Infancy, and were as the first Fruits of those many holy Martyrs who shed their Blood for the Sake of Christ. No doubt the Parents of these slaughtered Infants bewailed their cruel and untimely Death, which nevertheless was

to them a great and happy Advantage; for had they lived, they, or many of them might, like the other Jews, have rejected our Saviour, and been his Persecutors, and thereby have been eternally lost, whereas by thus losing their Lives, and shedding their Infant Blood on his Account, they gained Heaven and eternal Happiness. A similar Consideration will afford Comfort to all those who weep and mourn for the premature Death of their Children: Something indeed may be allowed to Nature on these melancholy Occasions, but a good Christian will moderate his Grief by considering the holy Will of God, and the Happiness of Children taken out of the World before they are corrupted by it. How many Children are unhappily in Danger of being ruined, and their Souls murdered by a vicious Education: This Misfortune God prevents by taking them out of the World betimes, and thereby displays his Mercy and his unerring Wisdom, and though Nature may prompt us to mourn and bewail such Losses, Grace will enable us to bear them with Patience and Resignation, and to say with holy *Job*: *The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away: Blessed be the Name of the Lord.* *Job*, chap. 1. ver. 21. The same Patience and Submission we are to shew under all other Trials and Afflictions which come upon us by the Permission of almighty God, as they are designed for our greater Good. How often does a constant Series of Prosperity prove prejudicial to us? But Adversity, like a sovereign Medicine, brings Health

Health to our Souls. Let us not then sink or be too much cast down under Trials and Crofies which we may meet with. God is infinitely wise, and orders all for the best: He is infinitely good and designs all for our Advantage. His Judgments are secret but always just, and the Designs of his Providence are always to be adored, and humbly submitted to; if we are called to walk in the Way of the Crofs here, we may be assured for our Comfort, that it will lead us to a Crown in the Kingdom of Heaven

A S P I R A T I O N S.

May I thus submit to all the Decrees of thy Providence, O thou wise Disposer of all Things! Every Circumstance of my Life is governed by thy unerring Wisdom, and all my Hours are in thy Hands. Be thou for ever blessed and praised for all that happens to me: and may I never desire any Thing but the Accomplishment of thy holy Will. If thou sendest me trials and Afflictions, enable me to bear them with Patience and Resignation. If thou deprivest me of those who are near and dear to me, thy Will be done; thy holy Name be praised. Thou can'st not do any Thing but what is for the best, for thy own greater Glory, and for my greater Good. I will adore thee then, O my God, in all the Dispensations of thy holy Will, and rejoice that every Thing happens as thou appointest.

O Jesus,

O Jesus, Saviour of the World! Thou wast glorified in the Death of these holy Innocents. Give me that Simplicity and Innocence as may make me acceptable to thee. Thou hast said, unless we become as little Children we shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; make me so, dear Lord, by thy Grace, that I may be admitted to the Enjoyment of thee in this thy glorious Kingdom.

O ye holy Innocents, Martyrs of Jesus Christ, pray for me that my Life may be innocent and holy, and my Death be happy as yours were. I will honour your Memory here, and may I partake of your Palms and Crowns hereafter!

DECEMBER 29.

St. THOMAS of Canterbury, Martyr.

THIS holy Archbishop of *Canterbury* was born at *London* in the Year 1119, and was educated by his pious Parents in the Fear of God, and a Love of Virtue, in which he so happily improved, as to be remarkable in his Youth for Piety and Devotion, and began when very young to practise Watching, Fasting, and other holy and penitential Exercises; and had so great a Love for Truth, as never to tell a Lye not even in Jest. These were happy Prefages of the great Sanctity to which afterwards he arrived: When he came to appear

pear in the World, *Theobald* then Archbishop of *Canterbury* had so great an Esteem for him, as to employ him on many Occasions, and made him his Archdeacon. The Chancellorship of *England* becoming vacant, King *Henry II.* thought none so capable of filling up that important Post as *Thomas Becket*, and accordingly conferred it upon him. In this Office he gave so much Satisfaction to the People and to his royal Master, that the King soon after made him Governor to the Prince his Son: And the Archbishop dying, the Chancellor was pitched upon to succeed him in the See of *Canterbury*, which he a long Time refused, and nothing but the absolute Will of the King and Authority of the Pope's Legate could prevail upon him to consent and accept of this high and eminent Station. Being thus Primate of all *England*, he soon made appear an extraordinary Zeal for the Glory of God and the Good of others, shewing himself an admirable Pattern for Prelates and inferior Ecclesiastics to imitate, as he was a strict Observer of ecclesiastical Discipline, and a strenuous Abettor and Maintainer of the Church's Rights, and that he might teach others by Example as well as by Preaching, Watching, Fasting, Prayer, and the Study of the holy Scriptures were his almost continual Employments. His great Charity and Compassion for the Poor made him freely and frequently declaim against the Avarice of the Rich, and their Oppressions of them, which raised him many Enemies among the great ones,

ones, and the King by Degrees began to lessen the Regard he had for him, and became his declared Enemy and most violent Persecutor. King *Henry* having a Mind to enact some Laws and Constitutions which St. *Thomas* judged injurious to the Rights of the Church, he strongly opposed them, nor would subscribe to them. This drew upon him the Resentment of *Henry*, who threatened the utmost Severity to the Prelate as an Enemy to his King and Country, if he would not comply. The resolute Archbishop refused, and his Enemies made a Handle of his Zeal for the Church to represent him in the worst Manner they could to the King and to inflame his Majesty the more against him. This caused a long Contest, and at length the Archbishop, at the earnest Intreaty of his Friends, promised to comply with King *Henry's* Desire, but soon after, and before he had subscribed, reflecting with himself that he had too much hearkened to the Voice of Flesh and Blood, he imposed upon himself a severe Penance, and resolv'd to repair his Fault by a firmer Adherence to his Duty, as Primate of *England* and Archbishop, and not to give up the Rights of the Church either through Fear or Favour. This Resolution he stood to with such an inflexible Constancy, that the Anger of the Monarch against him being much increased, so as to threaten Danger to his Life, he privately withdrew out of the Kingdom and went to *France*, where he found Pope *Alexander III.* into whose Hands he would have resigned his Archbishoprick, but his Holiness would

would not consent to his Dismission, and having approved his Constancy, and encouraged him to persevere therein, recommended him to the Cistercians, Monks at *Pontigny*, where he was joyfully received and honourably entertained. The Favours he received in *France*, extremely provoked the King of *England*, who banished all his Relations and Kindred, that the Calamities and Sufferings of his Friends might work upon him; which violent Proceedings did sensibly afflict the holy Prelate, but no Pity for his Friends could induce him to act contrary to what he thought was his Duty to God and his Church. King *Henry* finding him thus inflexible, turned his Resentment on the Abbot of *Pontigny* and writ a threatening Letter to him, telling him, that if he continued to entertain St. *Thomas* in his Monastery, he would seize upon all the Lands which the Cistercian Monks enjoyed in *England*. Upon this St. *Thomas*, unwilling the good Monks should suffer any Thing for their Kindness to him, retired from the Monastery, and went to *Paris* on the Invitation of *Lewis* the seventh, King of *France*, who received and entertained him with all the Honour and Respect due to his Character. Seven Years he remained an Exile in *France*, when by the pressing Solicitations of the Pope and the French King, *Henry* was reconciled to him, and he returned into *England* to the universal Joy of the whole Nation, and soon repaired to his archiepiscopal See of *Canterbury*, but had not remained long there when his Zeal in discharging

charging his Office occasioned fresh but false Complaints of him to be carried to the King who was then in *Normandy*. These Complaints being aggravated by some about him who were Enemies to the holy Prelate; *Henry* giving way to Passion which then seized him, broke out into this or the like expression: *It is hard I cannot keep Peace in my Kingdom with one Priest*. This Expression dropped without any Design or Intention against St. *Thomas*, was immediately taken hold of by four Courtiers who imagined they should highly ingratiate themselves with their Prince by murdering the Saint, and impiously resolved to do it. With this execrable Resolution they posted immediately to *England*, and went to *Canterbury*, where their Intention was soon known, and going to the Cathedral Church found St. *Thomas* there singing Vespers or Even-song with his Clergy and Monks. He readily and chearfully offered himself to their Swords, having forbid his Clergy to shut the Doors against them, saying, that Churches were not to be defended like Castles, and that he was very willing to lose his Life for the Church's Cause. Then turning himself to the Assassines, he required of them in the Name of God not to hurt any one else, and kneeling down, commended himself and his Church to God, to the Prayers of the blessed Virgin, St. *Denis*, and all the Saints, begging likewise Pardon for his Murderers who fell upon him, and with many Wounds deprived him of Life on the 29th Day of *December* in
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the Year 1170. The News of this barbarous Murder soon reached the King's Ear, who was extremely concerned at it, and immediately endeavoured to clear himself of the Guilt, or of any Ways ordering it; and because the Words he had said in the Warmth of his Temper had given a Handle which those impious Wretches laid hold of to perpetrate this Murder, he willingly submitted to the Penance enjoined by the Pope's Legate. As for the Actors of it, they did not long survive; and God was pleased to honour his Servant, by rendering his Tomb famous for the many and undeniable Miracles which were wrought at it thro' his Intercession, on which Account he was cononized by Pope *Alexander III*, and his Festival commanded to be kept on the Day of his Martyrdom in *England* as a Holiday of Obligation; and in the Catalogue of Feasts mentioned in a Council held at *Oxford*, *Anno* 1222. *Can.* 8. His Festival is mentioned on the 29th of *December*.

The G O S P E L. St. *John*, chap. x. ver. 11.

I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd giveth his Life for his Sheep. 12. But the Hireling, whose own the Sheep are not, seeth the Wolf coming, and leaveth the Sheep and flieth: And the Wolf catcheth and scattereth the Sheep. 13. And the Hireling flieth, because he is a Hireling, and hath no Care for the Sheep. 14. I am the good Shepherd; and I know mine, and mine know me. 15. As the
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the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father: And I lay down my Life for my Sheep. 16. And other Sheep I have that are not of this Fold: Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my Voice and there shall be one Fold and one Shepherd.

REFLECTIONS.

In how strong and amiable a Manner does Christ here express his Love to Mankind! In every Place almost of holy Scripture he uses so many endearing Expressions of Love to us, and manifests such an ardent Desire that we should likewise love him, as if he stood in Need of our Love, and could not be happy without it, and that it was his own Interest he sought, and not ours, which caused him thus to invite us to love and serve him. And tho' he is our sovereign Lord and Master, the supreme Monarch of Heaven and Earth, and has a just Right to command our Love and Service, yet he is pleased to assume those engaging Titles of Parent, Brother and Friend; that by them we may be moved to love him and to have a Confidence in him. And in the Gospel of this Day he styles himself a Shepherd, and to shew how good a Shepherd he is, he says, that he lays down his Life for his Sheep; that he loves them so tenderly as to be willing to suffer Death for them. This he did in his sacred Passion, dying on the Cross in a most painful and ignominious Manner, for us whom he calls his
Sheep,



Sheep, and to save us from the Jaws of the infernal Wolf, to free us from Sin and Death, and to make us eternally happy. What great ! what boundless Love ! does it not justly deserve a suitable Return of Love ? shall we not love him ? can we do too much for him who has suffered so much for us ? no, certainly. Let us love him then, and follow him this good Shepherd and hear his Voice, that we may shew we belong to his Fold, and be known and acknowledged by him for his Sheep.

We may further consider those Words of Christ : *I am the good Shepherd*, as applicable to every Christian with Relation to their respective Stations and Duties annexed to them. In which Regard they are Shepherds under Christ, and are to consider all under their Charge as so many Sheep committed to their Care, and must endeavour to shew themselves good Shepherds, and not base Hirelings who have neither Love nor Care of their Sheep. Thus Princes and Magistrates are to be good Shepherds to those over whom they rule. Parents in Regard of their Children, Masters and Mistresses to their Servants, and particularly Pastors in Respect of the Flock committed by God to their Charge. All Christians under these Denominations may be stiled so many Shepherds, and Woe be to them, if they do not by proper Care shew themselves good Shepherds : If they act the Part of Hirelings and abandon all Care of their Sheep, they will have a sad Account to render one Day, to Jesus Christ

Christ the sovereign and chief Shepherd over all, who will require at their Hands the Sheep he intrusted to them, and for whose Loss they must be responsible. But if Pastors of the Church, those in Offices, Parents and Masters are to consider themselves as Shepherds, the same may be said of every Christian. Every one may be called a Pastor or Shepherd, and has at least, one Sheep, his own Soul, committed to his Care, and which he ought to preserve even with the Hazard of his Life, otherwise he will prove himself a Hireling, and no good Shepherd. The Hireling, says Christ, sees the Wolf coming and flies away, and abandons the Sheep to the Fury of the Wolf who devours them. Alas ! how many Christians are there who abandon their Sheep, their Souls to the Wolf, that is to the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil ? who take no Care to preserve them by Resistance, and fly from all Helps of Grace, Prayer, and the holy Sacraments, and thus let their Souls become an easy Prey to the Enemy, shewing themselves worse than Hirelings ; for the Hireling flies from the Wolf, and abandons the Sheep because he is a Hireling, and the Sheep are not his ; but our Souls are our own. Every Man's Soul belongs to himself, and is the better Part of him. What Excuse then can such make for neglecting what is so much their Interest to preserve. Christians, seriously consider this and apply it Home to yourselves, and whatever you may find yourselves

selves deficient in, seriously endeavour to amend.

Christ not only calls himself the good Shepherd, but also says of his Sheep, that they know him, and that he knoweth them. They know him, and hear his Voice and follow him. They know him, not only by a speculative Knowledge or Faith in him, but practically : They hear his Voice and follow him in the Observance of his holy Commands. The true Sheep of Christ will not hear the Voice of a Stranger, nor will follow him. Just Character of a good Christian, who will follow none but Christ, and will not listen to the Voice of the World, the Flesh and the Devil. Enemies of Jesus Christ, who seek to draw aside and devour those Sheep for whom he shed his Blood. Sinners indeed, and Worldlings who care for nothing but the forbidden Pleasures this World, unhappily thereby abandon and lose their Souls. But how ungrateful must this be ? What unworthy Return to that Love he has shewn to us ! Ah, Christians, be not thus ungrateful. Have a greater Regard for your own Souls. Christ laid down his Life to save them from eternal Ruin ; and after this will you abandon them to a merciless Wolf ? Will you hearken to the Solicitations of the Devil who eagerly seeks to devour you. Remember that Christ is truly the good Shepherd, hear his Voice, and none but his : Follow him in the Way he leads you, as he only desires to conduct you to the sweet and delightful Pastures of heavenly

venly Bliss. And here we may see what a close Connection there is between our Interest and our Duty. If we are wanting in the Latter, we forfeit the Former ; for if we will not follow Christ in the Way of his holy Commands he will not own nor know us for his Sheep, whatever Pretensions we make to belong to him, by calling ourselves Christians, or saying we believe in him. It is only the sincere practical Christian that will be known by him. Others may say : *Lord, Lord*, but his Answer will be, *I never knew you : Depart from me you that work Iniquity.* St. Matt. chap. vii. ver. 23.

ASPIRATIONS.

O Jesus, the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind, the good Shepherd who didst give thy Life for thy Sheep ! let me not be as a Hireling careless and negligent of what thou hast intrusted to my Charge. Thou hast given to me my Soul that I should take care of it as a Sheep purchased with the Price of thy Blood. It is mine also, for it is my better Part, and if I lose it I shall be for ever miserable. And yet, O my God, have I not been hitherto very negligent and careless ? Have I not often fled away when I have beheld the Wolf coming, and not resisted as I ought. O make me, dear Lord, more careful for the Time to come : Give me Prudence to be watchful and solicitous for what I am so much concerned in. In-
spire

spire me with Courage to resist the Enemies of my Soul, and by thy Grace enable me to overcome them.

If I lose my Soul, I lose my All. I lose thee my God, for whom I was created. Can any Misery or Misfortune be so great as this? Let me never, dear Lord, experience this Loss, nor suffer that to be taken from me by my own Neglect, which thou hast so dearly loved, and for which thou didst lay down thy precious and sacred Life. O dear Redeemer of my Soul, how great a Love hast thou shewn for me! what Return can I make to thee, O the true and only Life of my Soul? Shall I not love thee again, O thou boundless, endless Love? May the Remembrance of thy Goodness never die! May daily and hourly Aspirations of reciprocal Love and Affection ascend from my Heart! O may I shew a grateful Sense of thy Love by sincere Endeavours to love thee more and more, and be ever faithful and constant to thee.

Holy Saint *Thomas*, who didst lose thy Life in Defence of the Duties of thy Charge as a Pastor of God's Church, pray for me that I may be faithful in all the Duties of my Calling, that, like you, I may receive the Reward of eternal Life.

DECEMBER 31.

N. B. *This Feast is not a Holyday in England, though formerly it was.*

St. SILVESTER, Pope.

THIS holy Successor of *St. Peter* was born at *Rome*, and by his Father *Rufinus* committed to the Care of *Cyrinus*, a learned and pious Priest, under whom he made so great a Proficiency in Learning and Piety as to be judged worthy of the sacerdotal Dignity, and at the Age of thirty Years was made Priest by Pope *Marcellinus*, and in that Station gave such Proofs of his excellent Talents, that he was chosen to succeed Pope *Melchades* in the Chair of *St. Peter*, in the Beginning of the Reign of the Emperor *Constantine* the Great, Anno 314, who happily put an End to those cruel Persecutions which had afflicted the Church for 300 Years, and sent so many Thousand Martyrs to Heaven through the red Sea of their own Blood. Peace being thus restored to the Church, *St. Silvester* shewed himself no less zealous for maintaining the Purity of the Catholic Faith, than he had been in Defence of the Christian Religion. For this End he made many wise and holy Decrees in Regard of the Clergy and of the Faithful. He sent his Legates
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to the Council of *Arles* which was held against the Donatists. It was under his Pontificate that *Arius*, a Priest of *Alexandria*, broached his impious Heresy and denied the Divinity of Jesus Christ. To condemn and proscribe which blasphemous Error the Emperor *Constantine*, at the Solicitation of Pope *Silvester*, summoned the first Council of *Nice*, a City of *Bitthynia*, in the Year 325. To this great and famous Council the Pope deputed, on his Part, *Osius*, Bishop of *Corduba*, in *Spain*, and *Vitus* and *Vicentius* Priests of the *Roman* Church. At this Council were present *Constantine* himself and 318 Bishops, wherein was condemned the Heresy of *Arius*, and the Dispute finished about celebrating the Feast of *Easter*, which was ordered to be kept by the whole Church on the Sunday after the 14th of *March* Moon. Many other excellent Regulations relating to ecclesiastical Matters and Church Discipline were made by *St. Silvester*, who having governed the Apostolic See with admirable Prudence and most exemplary Piety twenty Years, was called to receive the Reward of his Labours on the 31st of *December* in the Year 335.

The GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, chap. xii. ver. 35.

Let your Loins be girt, and Lamps burning in your Hands. 36. And you yourselves like to Men who wait for their Lord, when he shall return from the Wedding; that when he

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cometh

cometh and knocketh they may open to him immediately. 37. Blessed are those Servants whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find watching. Amen, I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to Meat and passing will minister to them. 38. And if he shall come in the second Watch, or come in the third Watch and so find them, blessed are those Servants. 39. But this know, that if the Householder did know at what Hour the Thief would come, he would surely watch and would not suffer his House to be broken open. 40. Be you then also ready: For at what Hour you think not, the Son of Man will come.

REFLECTIONS.

It is not hard or difficult to comprehend the Meaning of those Admonitions our blessed Lord gives in this holy Gospel. We may easily perceive his Design is to make us understand the Obligation we lie under of preparing ourselves for his coming at the last Day. In order to this, he makes use of two Comparisons, both natural and familiar. One of Servants waiting for the Return of their Lord. The other, of a Master of a Family watching to prevent Thieves breaking into his House. Christ is our great Master, and he will come again; and it is our Duty to be watching, and ready to receive him. The Devil is justly compared to a Thief who desires to break open
our

our House and to plunder it, that is, to get Possession of our Soul and rob it of its Innocence. To prevent him we must carefully watch and keep a Guard over ourselves. This must be done by carefully avoiding Sin, and the Occasions of it. We must have our Loins girt, by mortifying and keeping under all inordinate and irregular Passions and Desires, not to indulge or satisfy them by doing any Thing contrary the Duty of a Christian. We must keep all our Senses under a prudent and just Restraint. Our Eyes from looking upon dangerous and impure Objects. Our Ears from all unchaste Discourse, Detraction and Calumny against our Neighbour. Our Mouth and Tongue from all Excess and Intemperance, from all evil Speaking, Cursing, Swearing, Lying and Backbiting. Our Hands from all impure touching ourselves or others, from all Acts of Fraud and Injustice, and our Feet from walking in the Ways of Sin and Iniquity. Thus we must have our Loins girt, and also have Lamps in our Hands, by which is signified the Practice of good Works, according to what our Saviour says in another Place: *So let your Light shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.* St. Matt. chap. v. ver. 16. This is the Sum of our Duty, to abstain from Evil, and to do good. One without the other will do us no Service, nor render us acceptable to God. We must join them together, and then we shall be safe and secure.

Our divine Master, carrying on the Comparison, inforces his Admonitions by very powerful and interesting Motives. He says : in the Gospel of this Day, *Blessed are those Servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching.* A Master who is thus faithfully served and diligently waited upon by such Servants, will in Return give them some Marks of his Bounty and the Regard he has for them. He will, says Christ, *gird himself, and make them sit down to Meat, and passing will minister to them.* By this we are to understand that Recompence which God will give to all those who serve him faithfully. Such shall be rewarded with a Happiness that will infinitely surpass all their Labour and Sufferings. But we must here observe that these faithful Servants are only those who continue watching till their Lord comes, not only for one Hour or two, for a little Time, but till his Return, whether it be at the second or third Watch ; for it will signify nothing to watch for a little Time and then grow tired and leave off. It is Perseverance alone that must crown our Labours and entitle us to the promised Reward ; and without this our Labour will be lost and all our Hopes frustrated. *Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.* Apoc. chap. ii. ver. 10. If we desire to obtain this Crown, we must persevere and continue watching till our Lord shall come : Nor shall we repent our Labour and Pains, or think we have done too much when we are called

called to sit down at our great Master's Table in the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus does our Saviour invite us to our Duty, by laying before us our best and greatest Interest.

Another powerful Motive Christ makes use of to engage us to hearken to his Admonitions and prepare ourselves for his coming, is the Uncertainty of the Time when he shall come. *At what Hour you think not, the Son of Man will come.* St. Luke, chap xii. ver. 40. He will come at the End of the World, and at a Time when we least think of it. He will come to every one in particular at the Hour of Death, and he will come suddenly, for no Man knows when he shall die. He conceals the Hour of our Death from our Knowledge, to the End we should watch and attend every Hour of our Lives. He comes sometimes at the second, and sometimes at the third Watch. He takes one out of this World in his Youth, one in his Manhood and Flower of his Age, and another when he is old; for which Reason he would have us be always ready, and bids us watch, that when he knocks at the Door, by our last Sicknefs, we may readily open and let him in. This Uncertainty of the Time and also of the Manner, when and how we shall die, and the terrible Consequences of not being ready when Death comes, must certainly make some Impression on our Minds, and move our Wills to be careful in a Matter of so very great Importance to us. Otherwise, by the just and terrible Judgment of God, we may be suddenly

taken away, when we least apprehend it, and see our Folly when too late to retrieve it. Nothing can be more powerful then these Motives here urged by our blessed Saviour to stir us up to be diligent and fervent in the Service of God, that by regular and holy Lives we may be always ready, and then, though we may perhaps die suddenly, it will not be unprepared: For the best Preparation to die well, is to live well. This the Saints did, and thereby shewed themselves to be good and faithful Servants, and for this have been admitted to sit at his Table and partake of the Happiness of his Kingdom.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Bounty of Jesus! How generously does he reward the Labours of his Servants! Ah my Soul! can we think much to wait for our Lord's coming? Is it too much, too great a Trouble to make ourselves ready to receive him? No, no, let us continually watch and pray. If he comes not at the second, he may perhaps come at the third Watch. This we are assured that he will come, and we shall be happy if he find us ready to receive him. Courage then, O my Soul! Let us not be tired nor weary, but in a faithful Perseverance expect him, and hope to receive the glorious Reward.

O my infinitely good and gracious Master! assist me with thy Grace: Thou hast created me, O God: Thou hast redeemed me, and
thou

thou hast bestowed many other Favours upon me. Thou hast further promised me a glorious Recompence, and to give me eternal Happiness if I faithfully serve thee. Shall I then think my whole Life too much to give to thee in Return? Shall I rob thee but of a single Hour to spend it in Sin and Folly? Ah, no! my Duty is to wait for thy coming, and I will endeavour to be always ready to receive thee.

Glorious St. *Silvester*, faithful Servant of God! pray for me, and obtain for me Grace, that, like you, I may continually prepare myself for my Lord's coming, that my Lamp being trimmed, and Oil in my Vessel, I may enter with him to the Marriage Feast. *Amen. Amen.*

A P P E N D I X

FOR THE

Moveable Feasts.

E A S T E R - S U N D A Y.

THIS Day may with Truth be stiled the greatest Festival in the Year, as the Resurrection of our Lord is the Foundation of the Christian Religion, and that upon which all our Hope is built: For, as *St. Paul* observes, *1 Cor. chap. xv. ver 14. If Christ be not risen, our Faith is vain:* But he is risen, and by his glorious Resurrection has compleated the great Work of our Redemption, of which this Day is an annual Commemoration, and has been observed by the Church in all Ages from the Apostles Time. In the first Ages there was a Difference between the Western Church and the *Asiatics*, on what Day of the Moon this Festival should be kept. The Churches of *Asia* celebrated it on the 14th Day of the new Moon which followed the Equinox, on what Day of the Week soever it fell, and on the Day when the Jews kept their Feast of the Pasch or Passover. But this seeming to bear too great an Approach to the Jewish Rites, the Western Churches would have it observed, and accordingly

ingly kept it, on the *Sunday* after the 14th Day of the new Moon following the vernal Equinox. In the second Age St. *Polycarp*, Bishop of *Smyrna*, went to *Rome* to consult with Pope *Anicetus* about this Question, but did not however comply with the Practice of the See Apostolic. Some Years afterwards, in the Pontificate of Pope *Victor*, the Dispute was renewed with great Warmth, insomuch that the Pope threatened to excommunicate the *Asiatics*, if they would not quit the Custom of observing *Easter* according to the Jewish Account. St. *Irenæus* Archbishop of *Lyons*, and several other Prelates interposed, by Way of Mediation, and his Holiness only declared those to be excommunicated who should condemn as unlawful the Practice of the Western Church in observing the Festival of *Easter* always on a *Sunday*. This Controversy was at length ended by the first Council of *Nice*, wherein it was decreed, that *Easter* should be observed by the universal Church on the *Sunday* following the 14th Day of the new Moon of the Month of *March*, but so, that if the 14th Day fell upon a *Sunday*, *Easter-Day* should be the *Sunday* after, that the Christian Church might not seem to follow the Ceremonies of the Jewish Synagogue.

There are some Customs and Ceremonies practised in particular Churches which don't in the least hinder a Uniformity in the principal Mysteries of our holy Religion, and which by being tolerated, add to the Majesty and

Splendor of the Christian Discipline; but the Observance of *Easter* is a Point of that Importance as requires a strict Uniformity in the Time of keeping it, for it does not regard one particular Feast only, but many other great Feasts of the Year which depend upon it. The Fast of *Lent*, the Ascension of our Lord, the Feast of *Pentecost*, *Trinity-Sunday*, *Corpus Christi* Day, and the following *Sundays* till *Advent*, depending upon and being regulated by it. It seems likewise highly incongruous for one Part of the Christian World to be celebrating with Joy the Resurrection of our blessed Lord, and another Part by Fasting and penitential Exercises to be honouring at the same Time his sacred Passion. Hence it was a Mark of great Prudence in the Fathers of the Council of *Nice*, to put an End to this Difference by fixing the Time when this great Festival should be observed, and that with Uniformity throughout the whole Church; accordingly it was thus kept every where unless in *Great Britain* and *Ireland*, where it did not begin to be universally celebrated according to the Council of *Nice* till the Year 664, in the Reign of *Oswyn*, Monarch of the *English Saxons*, who observing that in his own Palace, *Easter* was kept on different Days by himself and his Queen, assembled a Council wherein it was decreed, that *Easter*, for the Time to come, should be kept on the same Day it was celebrated at *Rome*, and by the Apostolic See.

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Notwithstanding any Difference among the antient Churches as to the Day on which this Feast was to be kept, they all agreed in this, that it was a Festival of the first Rank, a Kind of Mother-Feast to all the rest, and therefore was every where observed with the greatest Solemnity, and in those happy Times of Fervour and Devotion, with equal Piety. The same Regard is had to it at present by the Church, which having dried up those Tears of Sorrow and Compassion she had for the Passion and Sufferings of her divine Spouse Jesus Christ, now rejoices in his Glorious Resurrection, and calls upon all her Children to join with her in repeated *Allelujas*: And while she endeavours to draw our Attention and excite our Devotion by the decent solemn Pomp wherewith she observes this Feast, desires that we would accompany her with sincere Sentiments of Piety, Gratitude and Love to God who has done so much for us; and that we may all have a Part in our blessed Lord's Resurrection, by rising ourselves to a new and spiritual Life, without which our outward and exteriour Acts of Devotion will do us no good, nor be acceptable to God.

The GOSPEL. St. Mark, chap. xvi. ver. 1.

And when the Sabbath was past, *Mary Magdalen* and *Mary* the Mother of *James*, and *Salome* brought Spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus. 2. And very early in the Morn-

Morning the first Day of the Week, they came to the Sepulchre, the Sun being now risen. 3. And they said one to another, who shall roll back the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre? 4. And looking they saw the Stone rolled back; for it was very great. 5. And entering into the Sepulchre, they saw a young Man sitting on the right Side, cloathed with a white Robe: And they were astonished. 6. Who saith to them, be not afraid. You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified: He is risen, he is not here. Behold the Place where they laid him. 7. But go, tell his Disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see him, as he told you.

REFLECTIONS.

How glorious is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ! how wonderful! how marvellous in all its Circumstances! *He is risen, he is not here*, said the Angel to the devout Women who went to visit his Sepulchre. If the Death and Passion of Christ were attended with all the Circumstances of Cruelty and Barbarity; if the Setting of this Sun of Justice in so dark a Cloud of Shame and Ignominy filled his Disciples with Grief and Sorrow, how is the Scene changed! It now appears all bright and glorious in his victorious and triumphant Resurrection from the Grave, where having, as he had foretold, laid three Nights and three Days, he united his holy Soul again to his Body, and
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by his own divine Power and Virtue, like a Triumphant Conqueror rose out of his Sepulchre laden with the Spoils of his Enemies, passed through the Stone placed before the Monument and hastened to shew himself to his sorrowful Disciples, to dispel all their Fears, and to confirm their Faith in him by shewing them that he was truly risen from the Dead with that same Body wherein he had suffered. In the Passion of our blessed Redeemer we beheld him in a sad and suffering State, expiring under the Torments he endured. His wicked Enemies the Jews thought they had not sufficiently triumphed over him by putting him to a cruel Death, unless they took away, as they foolishly thought, all Hopes from his Followers of his appearing again: For this End they sealed the Stone at the Door of the Sepulchre, and placed Guards to watch and prevent any Access to it. But how vain are the Counsels of Men, against the Designs of Heaven! How weak and ineffectual their strongest Efforts against the Power of Omnipotence! The Precaution the Jews took in sealing the Stone and placing Guards, served but to make the Resurrection of Jesus Christ more indubitable and conspicuous. He died on the Cross and was buried, Proofs that he was truly Man. On the third Day he raised himself to Life, and proved that he was no less true God. The Day of his Death appeared a Day of Shame, Ignominy and Weakness, but this Day of his Resurrection is truly a Day of Glory and Triumph.

Triumph. This Glory will appear in all its Lustre when we consider that never any Conqueror obtained a Victory more glorious for himself, more advantageous for his Subjects, nor more to the Confusion of his Enemies than Jesus Christ did by his Resurrection from the Dead.

The Life of our blessed Saviour upon Earth and before his Passion was a Life of Poverty and Humility, Labour and Fatigue, daily exposed to the Scorn and Contempt of the proud and haughty Scribes and Pharisees, his declared and bitter Enemies, by whom he was most horribly outraged and injuriously treated, but after his Resurrection he was above their feeble Power and impotent Malice. His Life before was mortal like ours, and he suffered Death : But after he was risen from the Dead it was immortal and impassible : He can die no more, Death has no more Dominion over him. He was indeed before his Passion the same Christ, true God and Man, but then his Divinity was veiled and obscured, as it were, under his Humanity, but after he was risen from the Grave he appeared like himself altogether divine, truly the Son of God, God himself. His Resurrection is also most advantageous for us Christians who are his Subjects and believe in him, it being a sure Pledge of our Resurrection by which we shall be delivered from all the Evils and Miseries of this World, and be rendered immortal and glorious like him, for as he is our Head and we his Members, we shall participate

pate of his Glory. This Victory of Jesus Christ over Sin and Death has filled his Enemies with Confusion. The Devil had long established his usurped Empire in the World, and deluded Mankind, erected Altars and offered Sacrifices to him, but by the glorious Light of our Saviour's Resurrection the Darkness of Idolatry was dissipated, and the Devil forced to quit that Usurpation he had so long exercised. We are now rescued from his Power, freed from his dreadful Slavery, and restored to the Liberty of the Sons of God. This makes the Resurrection of Jesus Christ truly glorious, and with Reason we may cry out and say with the royal Psalmist : *This is the Day which the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice therein.* Psalm cxvii. ver. 23.

In this Solemnity of Christ's Resurrection, we may likewise consider the great Piety and Devotion of the holy Women who went to visit his Sepulchre. Their Piety appears in this, that their Devotion tho' strong and fervent, was regular in the religious Observance of the Sabbath. The Jewish Law not being then abrogated, they staid till the Sabbath was over, and then early in the Morning went to the Monument, and carried with them sweet Spices and Perfumes to anoint the sacred Body of Jesus. Their Devotion did not rest in empty Words and Expressions, but made them act, sparing no Pains or Cost to give Proof of their Love of Jesus. They went early in the Morning while it was yet dark, burning with a holy Impatience

tience to see his Body, and as they went began to reflect on an Obstacle they had not before thought of, to wit, the great Stone that was placed before the Entrance into the Monument: They said one to another, *Who shall roll back the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre?* This Difficulty did not discourage them, nor make them turn back: They went on, and when they came to the Sepulchre found the Stone removed and an Angel sitting, who declared to them the joyful News of our Lord's Resurrection, saying, be not afraid: *You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified: He is risen, he is not here.* What a Transport of Joy may we suppose them to have been in on hearing this? Having entered the Monument and not finding the sacred Body, they were desirous instantly to communicate the good News, and ran to tell the Disciples their Lord was risen. Thus Christ rewarded the Piety of these holy Women, by letting them have the first Notice of his rising; and from hence we may learn to be zealous and fervent in the Service of God, and, according to our Ability, by Alms-Deeds and good Words give him a Proof of our Love. Works of Charity and Devotion are like precious Ointments, by them we anoint the Body of Jesus in the Persons of the Poor. We may further learn from the Behaviour of these devout Women, not to be discouraged at any seeming Difficulties or Obstacles which may occur in the Service of God, but to go on and persevere in the Way of Virtue,

tue, trusting in God whose holy Grace will enable us to surmount and overcome all Difficulties, and reward our Fervour and Diligence with spiritual Consolations, and let us experience the Truth of what the Psalmist says : *He who sows in Tears shall reap in Joy.* Psalm cxxv. ver. 7. like those devout Women who went mourning and to shed their pious Tears at the Sepulchre of Jesus, but returned with Joy and Gladness, the Angel telling them he was risen.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus, my adorable Saviour, my Life, my Hope, and all my Consolation ! Thou art risen, thy Sorrows are all past, and thou dost now gloriously triumph over thy Enemies. Thou didst declare thy Resurrection by the Ministry of an Angel to the pious Women who went early in the Morning to visit thy Sepulchre. How zealous and fervent was their Devotion ! how strong and active their Love ! What a Reproach to my Coldness and Tepidity, to my Lukewarmness and Indifference ! O when shall I love thee with a strong and fervent Love, and not be so easily discouraged by small, and even imaginary Difficulties ; Is there any Thing, dear Lord, more powerful than thy holy Grace ? O grant that I may now rise to a new and spiritual Life, and from this Moment begin to serve thee with Fidelity, with an ardent Zeal, and inflamed Affections of Love whereby I may
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overcome all Temptations of the Enemy; master my corrupt Inclinations, subdue my Passions, and correct every least Deviation from thy holy Will.

Thou art risen from the Grave, O thou victorious Conqueror of Sin and Death! thy Resurrection is a Day of Glory and Triumph to thee, and thou dost design it as a Day of Joy and Consolation for me. May I happily experience the Fruit of this thy glorious Victory. May Sin no longer have any Power over me, nor again captivate my Soul. I desire to live with thee, and to thee here, that I may rise at the last Day in the glorious Resurrection of the Just.

I firmly believe, O Jesus, that I shall rise again, that thou wilt raise my Body from the Dust, and that I shall behold thee coming in great Glory and Majesty, and I hope at that Time to meet thee in the Company of the Blessed. This my Hope shall sustain me, and be my Comfort in all the Troubles I may meet with here. I know that then all Sorrow will be turned into Joy; all Weeping be changed into everlasting Comforts, and that then I shall be eternally happy with thee. My Soul longs for this thy glorious Coming; wearied with the Troubles and Miseries of this World, it seeks to be at rest, dear Lord, with thee. Come then, O beloved of my Soul, and take me to thyself. Come, dear Lord, but in thine own good Time. By thy Grace make me fit for thee, and then take me to thee when ever thou pleassest.

EASTER-

E A S T E R - M O N D A Y .

TH O', according to the present Custom of the Church, only *Monday* and *Tuesday* in *Easter-Week* are Holidays, yet anciently the whole Week was kept as one entire Feast, during which Time all servile Works and worldly Business was prohibited, and a due Attendance on the Church's Service required, as appears by the Canons of several Councils and the Edicts of several Emperors, cited by Father *Thomasine*, in his Treatise of the Feasts of the Church. In a Council held at *Ingleheim* in *Germany*, 949, it was decreed that at the Feast of Pentecost four Days should be observed as Holidays, and the whole Week at *Easter*. In the Year 1094, it was ordered by a Synod of *Constance* held by *Gebehard*, Bishop and Legate of the Pope, that three Days should be observed at *Easter*, and as many at Pentecost, thereby changing the Custom which had been introduced in the Diocese of *Constance*, to observe the whole Week of *Easter*, and but one Day at Pentecost. The same Change began afterwards to be made in other Churches, and the Practice by Degrees became universal of celebrating as Feasts of Obligation, but two Days after *Easter-Sunday*, and two days after Pentecost; and as formerly Baptism, out of Cases of Necessity, used to be conferred only and solemnly at *Easter* and Pentecost, that is, during the
 Octaves

OCTAVES of those Feasts, the Disuse and laying aside that Custom may have been one Reason why the Number of *Easter* and Pentecost Holidays were diminished.

The GOSPEL. St. Luke, chap. xxiv. ver. 13.

And behold two of them went the same Day to a Town called *Emmaus*, which was fixty Furlongs from *Jerusa'em*, 14. And they were talking together of all these Things that had happened. 15. And it came to pass, as they talked and reasoned with themselves, Jesus himself drawing near, went with them. 16. But their Eyes were held, that they should not know him. 17. And he said to them, What are these Discourses that you hold with one another and are sad? 18. And one of them whose Name was *Cleophas*, answering, said to him, Art thou only a Stranger in *Jerusalem*, and hast not known the Things that have been done there in these Days? 19. To whom he said, What Things? And they said, Concerning Jesus of *Nazareth*, who was a Prophet, mighty in Work and Word before God and all the People. 20. And how our Chief-Priests and Princes delivered him to be condemned to Death, and crucified him. 21. But we hoped that it was he that should have redeemed *Israel*: and now besides all this, Today is the third Day since these Things were done. 22. Yea, and certain Women also of our Company affrighted us, who before it
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was Light were at the Sepulchre. 23. And not finding his Body, came, saying that they had also seen a Vision of Angels, who say that he is alive. 24. And some of our People went to the Sepulchre, and found it so as the Women had said, but him they found not. 25. Then he said to them, O foolish, and slow of Heart, to believe in all Things which the Prophets have spoken. 26. Ought not Christ to have suffered these Things, and so to enter into his Glory? 27. And beginning at *Moses* and all the Prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the Things that were concerning him. 28. And they drew near to the Town whither they were going: and he made as tho' he would go farther. 29. But they constrained him, saying, stay with us, because it is towards Evening, and the Day is now far spent. And he went in with them. 30. And it came to pass, whilst he was at Table with them, he took Bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to them. 31. And their Eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their Sight. 32. And they said one to the other, Was not our Heart burning within us, whilst he spoke in the Way, and opened to us the Scriptures? 33. And rising up the same Hour they went back to *Jerusalem*: and they found the Eleven gathered together, and those that were with them. 34. Saying that the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to *Simon*. 35. And they told what Things were done in the Way: and

and how they knew him in the Breaking of Bread.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

From our blessed Lord's appearing to the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*, and the Circumstances of it, as related in this Gospel, may be drawn many useful and practical Lessons and proper Subjects for our serious Reflections this Day. Two of Christ's Disciples were going to a Town a little Way from *Jerusalem*, and were talking together about the Sufferings and Death of Jesus. He was then risen from the Dead, and appearing to them joined himself to their Company, but in a Manner so as not to be known by them. When they arrived at *Emmaus*, he made as if he would have gone farther, but they desired he would not leave them, being so pleased with his holy Conversation, and his having so pathetically expounded to them the sacred Scriptures relating to the Passion and Sufferings of himself, that their Hearts burning within them, they could not think of parting from him, and therefore pressed him earnestly to remain with them, saying to him, *Stay with us*. This their pious Importunity prevailed upon Jesus Christ, and he went in with them. It is no hard Matter to obtain of Christ to remain with us ; for tho' he may seem sometimes as if he would leave us, he does it only to make us the more desire his blessed Company. His delight is to
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be with the Sons of Men, as he himself assures us in his sacred Word; hence he easily complied with the Request of these two Disciples, and in Return to their Good-will manifested himself to them in the breaking of Bread. Great was the Happiness of these two Disciples thus to enjoy the Company of Jesus, and is an admirable and instructive Figure of a Christian Soul who has received Jesus Christ in the holy Communion. In a due Compliance with the Church's Precept, we are supposed to have made our *Easter* Communion, and to have received Jesus Christ, who has visited and given himself to us. But we are to consider, that as Jesus Christ thus visits us, we must engage him to remain with us, and for that End press him, as these Disciples did, and say, *Lord, stay with us.* To obtain this, we must stay with him. If we would not have him quit us: we must not abandon him. We must be faithful and constant to the good Purposes and Resolutions we have made this holy *Easter*-time, and not quit his holy Service, but persevere therein, then he will remain with us, and bless us with his holy Company, and daily give us his Grace here and make us eternally happy hereafter. It is thus we are spiritually to rise with Christ, and to make it appear that we are risen, and as the Apostle exhorts us to *seek those Things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right Hand of God; and to mind the Things that are above, and not the Things that*

that are upon the Earth. Col. chap. iii.
ver. 2.

We are further to consider, that to rise with Christ we must be truly risen, not in Appearance only, or in a meer external Shew of complying with our *Easter Duty*. *The Lord is truly risen and hath appeared to Simon.* In these Words are comprised the two great Qualities of our Saviour's Resurrection. The Reality, and the Manifestation of it. Our blessed Lord did truly rise, and he appeared as truly risen. As his Resurrection is the Model or Pattern by which our Resurrection to a new Life must be formed, we must endeavour to shew these two Qualities. We must be truly risen, by a sincere and real Change of Life and Manners, *that even as Christ hath risen from the Dead by the Glory of his Father, so we should walk in Newness of Life.* Rom. chap. vi. ver. 4. This Newness of Life chiefly regards the Heart, for if that is not changed, we are not truly risen. Let us rise then, Christians at this holy Time, by a Change of Life, and have no more to do with the sinful Pleasures, the Follies and Vanities of the World, that we may be able to say with St. Paul, *I live, not I, but Christ in me, and I in him.* Gal. c. ii. v. 20. What has a Christian to do with the sinful Vanities of the World? He is a Member of Christ, who is his Head. Christ is risen and ascended into Heaven, and Christians ought to follow him thither in Heart and Affection, for where the Head is, there ought the Members
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to be also. Christ is risen and ascended into Heaven, and shall not we endeavour to arrive at that happy Place? Christians! we must do something; as it justly deserves our greatest Care and most serious Endeavours to obtain it, so it will be a Reward worth all the Pains we have taken for it.

The second Quality of Christ's Resurrection was his Manifestation of it, and which we must observe in our spiritual Resurrection to a new Life. To appear to have risen and not to be so, is Hypocrisy. To rise and not let it appear, is Weakness and human Respect. If by the Grace of God we are risen by a sincere Conversion, we must let it truly appear to others, that they may be edified and give Glory to God in beholding this Change in us. No human Motives, or Fear of what the World will say of us must hinder this. Why should we apprehend, or be ashamed of letting it be known, that we have left off vicious Customs, that we have left the Ways of Sin, to walk in the Paths of Virtue? Why should we be ashamed of doing good Works, and of living soberly and regularly like what we profess to be, Christians? *Let your Light shine before Men,* says Jesus Christ, *that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.* St. Matt. chap. v. ver. 16. This is not only to celebrate, as we ought, our blessed Lord's Resurrection, but also to have a Part in it, and by thus rising to

a spiritual Life here, we shall rise one Day to a happy Life of Glory hereafter.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O that I may thus truly rise, and make it appear that I am risen! O my God, may I be no more what I have been, cold, tepid, lukewarm and indifferent. May I now be fervent and zealous in thy holy Service, and by my good Example stir up others to be so likewise! I have too long, alas! been negligent and careless. It is now time I should begin to love and serve thee as I ought.

O powerful Love, divine Love, which has wrought so many happy Conversions, work one more, and make me all thine. Change and transform me into thee. O that I could be so happy as to induce all the World to love thee? At least, dearest Lord! let me love thee, and may I prove the Sincerity of my Love by my daily Endeavours to please thee. While I celebrate the Triumphs of thy Love in this thy glorious Resurrection, May the happy Effects of it appear in my Soul, by rising with thee. Then will I sing aloud the Mercies of thee my God, and praise thy Name for ever and ever.

E A S T E R - T U E S D A Y

The GOSPEL. St. Luke, ch. xxiv. ver. 36.

NOW while they were speaking these Things, Jesus stood in the Midst of them, and saith to them, Peace be to you : it is I, fear not. 37. But they being troubled and frightened, supposed they saw a Spirit. 38. And he said to them, Why are you troubled, and why do Thoughts rise in your Hearts ? 39. See my Hands and Feet, that it is I myself ; handle and see : for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as you see me to have. 40. And when he had said this, he shewed them his Hands and Feet. 41. But while they yet believed not and wondered for Joy, he said, Have you here any Thing to eat ? 42. And they offered him a Piece of a broiled Fish, and a Honey-comb. 43. And when he had eaten before them, taking the Remains, he gave to them. 44. And he said to them, these are [the Words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all Things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the Law of *Moses*, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. 45. Then he opened their Understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. 46. And he said to them, that thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to

rise again from the Dead the third Day. 47.
And that Penance and Remission of Sins
should be preached in his Name unto all Na-
tions beginning at *Jerusalem*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

It is not easy to conceive those Transports of Joy we may reasonably suppose the Apostles to have been in when our blessed Lord appeared to them. Their Joy was so great to see their beloved Master, as they could scarce believe what they saw or think that it was he. They beheld his Person, they heard him speak, they knew his Voice, and yet remained in a doubtful Suspense whether it was he or no: They were filled with Joy, and they were filled with Wonder and Amazement. Jesus Christ soon removed their Doubts and completed their Joy by giving them convincing Proofs that they were not deceived, that they did not see a Spirit, but him truly risen and appearing to them in his real Body consisting of Flesh and Bones. He gave them his usual kind Salutation, *Peace be to you*, and bid them not be afraid to behold him again in that same Body in which he had before conversed with them, and in which he had been crucified. This Joy of the Apostles is an admirable Figure and Representation of that spiritual Joy with which the Heart of a true penitent Sinner is filled when he rises, by a sincere Conversion, to a new Life. Such an one
at

at first beholds himself with Wonder and Surprise, which is succeeded by an inexpressible Joy and Satisfaction. The Remembrance of his past Disorders strikes him with a holy Horror, and he finds a Difficulty to believe that he was able to live in a State of Sin, which he then beholds in a true Light, and is in Amazement as it were to consider the Mercy of God in bringing him from the sad State of Sin, to that of Grace. His Soul is at the same Time filled with interior Joy and Consolation to find himself freed from his former miserable Condition. This Joy is infinitely greater and more solid than all the Joy and Satisfaction he found heretofore in the criminal Enjoyments of the World. The Joy or Pleasure of Sin is a dry, fading and false Joy which is soon over, and while it seems to please the Senses, does really affect the Mind by the Remorse of Conscience which it always leaves behind it. But the Joy of a sincere Conversion is a Joy solid and entire, a real and lasting Joy which the Scripture calls, *Gaudium Cordis, A Joy of the Heart*. A Joy pure, without Mixture of Grief, or doubtful Apprehensions; for tho' the penitent and converted Sinner will grieve and be sorry, and shed Tears at the Remembrance of his past Sins, yet they are not Tears of servile Fear and Distrust in the Mercy of God, but are filial Tears of Love and Regret for having been so unhappy as ever to have offended his heavenly Father, and to this is joined a true filial Con-

silence in him whom he now truly loves. This is a Joy which produces that Peace of Mind which, *St. Paul* says, passes all Understanding. This is that perfect Love, which, according to *St. John*, casteth out Fear, and from whence rises a Joy permanent and lasting, which as the World cannot give, so neither can it take it away. Happy, thrice happy Souls, who experience this Joy by a true and sincere Conversion, and Love of God.

This Joy, this Peace of Mind which the penitent Sinner thus attains by a true Conversion, he must be careful to retain and preserve, by making a right Use of the Mercy he has received. As a Sinner doing Penance brings not only Joy to himself, but also before the Angels of God. *St. Luke*, chap. xv. ver. 7. to disturb this holy Joy, or to lose it by relapsing again wilfully into Sin would be dreadful, and attended with the most fatal Consequences, as we may learn from what our blessed Saviour said to the sick Man whom he had cured; *Behold thou art made whole: sin no more lest some worse Thing happen to thee.* *St. John*, chap. v. ver. 14. Christians! if we are truly risen with Christ at this holy Time, if we are Partakers of the Joy of this Solemnity, and share in that Peace Christ gave to his Apostles, let it be our Care to shew a grateful Sense of the Mercy we have received, by due Returns of Love and Obedience. Let us love him, who has so loved us, and let us shew our Love by Obedience to his holy
Law,

Law, and our sincere Endeavours to please him in all Things. Thus shall we procure to ourselves true and solid Happiness in this World, and eternal Glory in the next.

ASPIRATIONS.

O my adorable Jesus, Source of all true Joy and Fountain of Happiness ! fill my Soul with those divine and heavenly Joys which thou bestowest upon those who truly Love thee. Send thy holy Grace into my Heart, that by a true and sincere Conversion I may rise from Earth to Heaven, from this World and all that is in it to live to thee, and to thee only. O when shall I be so happy, dear Saviour of the World, as to behold thee ? When shall I enjoy what I earnestly wish for, the Possession of thee my chief and only Good ?

O Jesus, thou didst appear to thy beloved Disciples, and didst remove their Fears, and comfort them with thy gracious Presence. Come, O thou beloved of my Soul, and appear to me likewise. Manifest thyself to me in the Interior of my Soul, and dispel all Fear and Apprehension. Then shall I rejoice and be glad, and sing aloud the Praises of thy holy Name. Then will I magnify and declare thy Goodness. Then I shall be filled with true Joy ; for there is no Happiness or true Joy but in thee, and with thee. O may I never more be separated from thee !

ASCENSION-DAY.

THE Feast which the Church celebrates at this Time is an annual Commemoration of the Ascension of our blessed Lord, who having remained on Earth after his Resurrection forty Days, during which he frequently appeared to his Disciples, and having given them Commission to preach his Gospel to all Nations, and promised to send upon them the Holy Ghost, he led them to Mount *Olivet*, where taking his leave of them, and having solemnly blessed them, a Cloud received him out of their Sight, and he ascended up to Heaven, where he sitteth at the right Hand of God the Father. This Festival is of very early Date, and mention is made of it in the Apostolic Constitutions, which whether they are, or are not the genuine Constitutions of the Apostles, are nevertheless sufficient Proofs of the Antiquity of this Festival.

The History of our Saviour's Ascension with all the Circumstances of it, is related by St. *Luke*, in the *Acts* of the Apostles, chap. i. and the Church reads it this Day for the Epistle at Mass; and is more briefly related by St. *Mark*, in his holy Gospel, chap. xvi. in reading of which we shall find many useful and practical Instructions.

The GOSPEL. St. Mark, chap. xvi. ver. 14.

At length he appeared to the eleven as they were at Table; and he upbraided them with their Incredulity and Hardness of Heart; because they did not believe them who had seen him after he was risen again, 15. And he said to them: Go ye into the whole World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature. 16. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned. 17. And these Signs shall follow them that believe: In my Name they shall cast out Devils; they shall speak with new Tongues. 18. They shall take up Serpents: and if they shall drink any deadly Thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay their Hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. 19. And the Lord Jesus after he had spoken to them was taken up into Heaven, and sitteth at the right Hand of God. 20. But they going forth, preached every where; the Lord working withal, and confirming the Word with Signs that followed.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

The holy Jesus being about to take leave of his Disciples, and having disposed them for this his Separation from them, he led them to Mount *Olivet*, and there lifting up his Hands he blessed them. We may here consider with what Love and tender Affection he gave his
X 5 Blessing

Blessing to them. *Having loved his own who were in the World, he loved them to the End.* St. John, chap. xiii. ver. 1. With what Humility and Reverence did the Apostles receive this last Benediction of their dear Lord and Master? What a Change did it work in them? Before, when he told them he was to leave them, and that within a little while they should not see him, their Hearts were filled with Sorrow and Grief: But now they were filled with Joy and Gladness; and when he had blessed them, raising himself upwards by his own divine Power, a Cloud received him out of their Sight. This was a wonderful Sight to the Apostles to see their divine Master ascending up. *And while they were beholding him going up to Heaven, behold two Men stood by them in white Garments, who also said to them: Ye Men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to Heaven? This, Jesus who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come as you have seen him going into Heaven.* Acts, chap. i. ver. 52. *And they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great Joy.* St. Luke, chap. xxiv. ver. 11. But if the Ascension of Jesus Christ was a glorious Sight to the Apostles, it was no less delightful to all the blessed Angels and celestial Powers, to behold him resplendant with Light, and environed with Glory and Majesty, whom they so lately had seen covered with Blood and Wounds, and oppressed with Injuries and Affronts. Hence they broke forth into Hymns of Joy and Thanksgiving, such as their mutual

tual Gladness and Admiration inspired. Singing, *Open your Gates, ye Princes, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting Doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.* Psalm xxiii. ver. 17. Let us join with them and bear a Part in this our Lord's Triumph and Ascension: We have just Reason so to do, for if it is glorious and triumphant for him, it is also glorious and advantageous for us, since he is ascended into Heaven to prepare a Place for us in those happy Regions of Bliss, as he said to his Disciples, *I go to prepare a Place for you, that where I am you also may be.* St. John, chap. xiv. ver. 2, 3.

Jesus Christ in his holy Resurrection gave us a Model of a true and visible rising which we are to imitate by a spiritual Resurrection from the Death of Sin to a Life of Grace, and in his admirable Ascension instructs us how we are likewise spiritually to ascend to Heaven by raising up our Hearts thither, and by drawing off our Affections from the Things of this World, that is, from the Poms and Vanities of it, from all inordinate Affection to the World and Creatures. As Christ our Head is ascended into Heaven, we who are his Members ought to follow, and not separate ourselves from him. But, can those Christians be said to ascend spiritually to Heaven whose Heart and Affections are glewed as it were to the Earth, and whose whole Endeavours are for the vain and transitory Pleasures of this Life? Are they not like the Disciples, of whom it is said in this Gospel, that Christ reproved them

them for their Incredulity, in that they did not believe those who had seen him after his Resurrection? For, can Christians truly believe that Christ is risen, and that he is ascended into Heaven, and yet live as if they had neither Hopes nor Desires of going there. If we did truly believe that Heaven is so glorious a Place. and that Christ is gone before to prepare for us a Place in it, surely we should not run the Hazard of losing it for any Thing this World can give! Let us seriously reflect upon this; let us despise this World and place all our Esteem upon the other; there let our Hearts and Affections be placed; thither let us daily ascend by Love and Desire, by serious Endeavours, that we may be so happy, as, one Day, to arrive there, which we shall certainly do, if we are not wanting to ourselves. From the Glories of that happy Place we may be moved to contemn and despise all the false and Fading Pleasures of this Life; and as we are not made for this World alone, in vain we seek to be happy in it, since all that is here is of short Duration, uncertain, not worth a Christian's serious Thought: But in Heaven we shall possess all that we can wish or desire; there our Joy will be full and our Happiness compleat; there we shall be happy for all Eternity. What a comfortable Reflection is this to a sincere good Christian! to be happy with God for ever, to live for ever in Heaven. O how despicable must this World and all its glittering Follies appear when compared to the Glories of the
next?

next? Let us then bid adieu to a vain World, to all inordinate Love of Creatures. Let us seek Jesus, and to enjoy him where he is gone to prepare a Place for us. For this let us follow him by walking in the Paths of his holy Commands: for by following him faithfully here, we shall secure our Happiness with him hereafter.

ASPIRATIONS.

I own, O Lord, I confess that thou alone art the only worthy Object of my Love, and thou oughtest to be the only End of all my Wishes and Desires. And since thou the Treasure of my Soul art ascended to Heaven, there shall my Heart be also. Yes, O my adorable Jesus, thou art the true Treasure of my Soul. Thou art my Life, my Happiness, and all the Good that I can wish or desire. But thou art not here, nor is it here that I must seek thee. Thou art ascended into Heaven, there thou art and there my Desires shall be fixed; there I hope to possess and love thee, to love and possess thee, and to enjoy thee for ever. For thee will I contemn and despise this World and all its false Joys and sinful Pleasures, which are all empty Nothings unworthy of my Esteem and Affections. Adieu, vain World! Adieu, all Creatures! I renounce to you all. I seek for Jesus, he is not here, he is ascended above, and gone to prepare a Place for me among his faithful Followers.

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O my divine Jesus ! Thou art gone to prepare a Place for me ; prepare also my Heart, that it may be in some Measure fitly disposed for that Happiness thou desirest to bestow upon me. Give me, dearest Lord, those Graces I stand in need of, and grant that I may never be separated from thee. Leave me not an Orphan, but daily visit me with thy holy Spirit, till thou shalt please to take me from hence, and bring me to the Enjoyment of thee in Heaven.

Pentecost, or Whit-Sunday.

AS our blessed Lord had frequently mentioned to his Apostles the Holy Ghost, and promised to send that divine Spirit upon them, when he took his last Leave of them before his Ascension, he ordered them not to depart from *Jerusalem*, but there to wait for the Accomplishment of his Promise, which he assured them should be within a few Days. Accordingly they returned to *Jerusalem*, and being assembled together in one Place, the Holy Ghost came upon them in the Appearance of cloven Tongues of Fire, and immediately they were enabled to speak all Languages, and were filled with Zeal and Courage, and boldly preached the Faith and Name of Jesus Christ to the Jews then present in *Jerusalem*, and afterwards to all Nations of the World. This
wonderful

wonderful Descent of the Holy Ghost was ten Days after our Saviour's Ascension, and when the Jews kept a solemn Feast which they called *Pentecost*, in Memory of the Law being given to *Moses* on Mount *Sinai*; at which Time they also made their solemn Offerings to God, of the first Fruits of the Earth, as he had appointed them. On which Account, and for the Relation this Feast of the Jews had to the present Christian Solemnity, the Church has thought fit to retain the Name, and still calls it the Feast of *Pentecost*, or *Pentecost-Sunday*. The Relation between the Jewish and Christian *Pentecost* consists in this, that as the *Mosaic* Law was given on Mount *Sinai* fifty Days after the Passover or Pasche instituted by God on their Deliverance out of *Egypt*, so the Descent of the Holy Ghost was fifty Days after the Christian Passover, or when Christ the true Paschal Lamb was sacrificed for us, and we thereby delivered from the Slavery of the Devil. The giving also the Law to the Jews in Thunder and Lightening was a Type and Figure of the Law of Grace this Day promulged by the holy Ghost, and accompanied with a new Noise and Fire, and by the holy Apostles published to all the World. The first Fruits likewise which the Jews at this Time offered, were a Figure of the Apostles spiritual Harvest in the three thousand Souls converted by St. *Peter's* first Sermon, and the five thousand by his second.

This

This Festival is of early Date in the Christian Church and is of apostolical Institution. St. *Paul* mentions his hastening up to *Jerusalem* to celebrate the Feast of *Pentecost*. *Acts*, chap. xx. ver. 16. And it has always been esteemed as one of the more solemn Feasts for which Christians ought to prepare themselves, and to celebrate it with the greatest Devotion. Hence it always did, and still does keep an equal Rank with *Easter*, or the Feast of our Lord's Resurrection; and, as formerly the whole Octave of *Easter* was kept as one continued Holiday, so likewise was the Octave of *Pentecost*. In the first Ages of the Church it was the Custom to confer solemn Baptism upon adult Persons only at *Easter* and *Whitsuntide*, at which Times the Neophytes, or new-baptized were clad in a white Garment, and which they wore during the Octave in Token of that Innocence and Purity to which they were restored by the Sacrament of Baptism: From whence this Day came to be called here in *England*, *Whit-Sunday*, or *White-Sunday*, as this Solemnity is still called *Whitsuntide*, and the Church prescribes the Blessing of the baptismal Font on the Vigil of *Pentecost*, as on *Easter Eve*.

The GOSPEL. St. John chap. xiv. ver. 23.

Jesus answered and said to him: If any Man love me, he will keep my Word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him,
and

and will make our Abode with him. 24. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my Words. And the Word which you have heard is not mine, but the Father's who sent me. 25. These Things have I spoken to you, abiding with you. 26. But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he will teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your Mind whatsoever I shall have said to you. 27. Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you; not as the World giveth do I give unto you. Let not your Heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. 28. You have heard that I said unto you, I go away, and I come unto you. If you loved me you would indeed be glad because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it shall come to pass you may believe. 30. I will not now speak many Things with you. For the Prince of this World cometh, and in me he hath not any Thing. 31. But that the World may know that I love the Father: And as the Father hath given me Commandment, so do I.

REFLECTIONS.

In the Solemnity of this Day we are to consider the Accomplishment of the Promise made by our blessed Saviour to his Apostles in the wonderful Descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, and for which they were prepared and disposed

disposed by Recollection, Prayer, and being together in one Place. Herein they shewed their Obedience to the Command of Christ, who had ordered them not to stir from *Jerusalem* till they had received the Promise of the Father which they had heard from him. Many particular Circumstances may here be taken notice of; all of them mysterious, and all of them instructive. First, we may observe, that as St. *Luke* relates, *Acts* chap. ii. the Apostles were in an upper Room, all-together in the same Place; by which is signified that Union and mutual Love which was among them; and as the Holy Ghost is a Spirit of Peace, if we desire to be favoured with his Visits we must be Lovers of Peace, and carefully preserve Union and Concord with one another; for Strife and Contention shut the Door, as it were, against him. Hence St. *Peter* recommends 1 Ep. chap. iv. ver. 8. that above all Things we maintain fraternal Union and Charity, and herein we are to imitate the Apostles and first Believers, of whom St. *Luke* relates, *Acts* chap. iv. that they were all of one Heart and one Soul. Secondly, we may take notice that the Apostles were persevering in Prayer. From whence we may learn that fervent and assiduous Prayer is a necessary Condition to obtain the Assistance of the Holy Ghost. Accordingly our blessed Saviour tells us, *the Father will give the good Spirit to those who ask him.* St. *Luke* chap. xi. ver. 13. and St. *James* says, *If any one desire the Spirit of Wisdom, let him ask of God*
who

who giveth abundantly. St. James chap. i. ver. 5. But we must not only pray but persevere in Prayer as the Apostles did. Again, when the Holy Ghost came upon them *it filled the whole House where they were sitting.* Acts chap. ii. ver. 5. In which Words are contained an Instruction for us, that this divine Spirit descends only on those Souls who by the Peace of a good Conscience live in a State of Tranquility, free from the Noise and Tumult of worldly Vanities and Sin, and we must endeavour thus to dispose our Hearts for the Reception of this divine Guest, that he may at this holy Time especially visit us with his Grace, and take up a Habitation with us.

The Holy Ghost being descended upon the Apostles, immediately wrought a most wonderful and surprising Change in them. How different were they after the Descent of this divine Spirit from what they were before. When our blessed Lord called them to follow him, they were poor, illiterate Fishermen, slow of Understanding, dull in comprehending what our Saviour meant in his Discourses and Exhortations; so timorous likewise and fearful, that upon the first Approach of *Judas* and the Jews to apprehend Jesus, they all forsook him and fled away, and the chief of them St. Peter three Times with Oaths and Curses denied him: And after his Resurrection they were backward in believing the Truth of it, and so apprehensive of themselves as to meet only in the Evening, privately and with the Doors shut for fear
of

of the Jews. The Condition of the Apostles at that Time seemed to be very miserable, and to render them of all Men the most unfortunate. They were poor, contemned, and despised; they had lost the Presence and Company of their divine Master, and thereby seemingly all Protection and Succour; and were also exposed and hourly in Danger of falling a Sacrifice to the Resentment and Malice of the Jews. In these Circumstances were they when the Holy Ghost came upon them and wrought that wonderful Change which soon appeared. Of ignorant and illiterate Men, they suddenly were endued with Learning and Wisdom from Heaven, so as to put to Silence and confound all the Jewish Rabbies, and to confute and overcome all the heathen Philosophers. They became bold and courageous, and not only confessed Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and the true promised Messias before the High-Priest and Jewish Sanhedrim, though they were forbid and threatened with Death and cruelly scourged on that Account, but even rejoiced that they were found worthy to suffer for the Name of Jesus. They had the Gift of Tongues and could speak readily and with Eloquence the Languages of all Nations, and by which they propagated the Gospel in all Parts of the World, preaching Jesus Christ true God, and Faith in him before Kings and Princes, despising all Dangers, overcoming all Difficulties, and at last triumphantly crowned all their Labours by a glorious Martyrdom, bringing forth as many
Infants

Infants to the Church as they shed Drops of Blood which were as the Seeds of so many spiritual Births. This was the wonderful Change wrought by the Holy Ghost in the Apostles. Let us admire and give God Thanks for it, and beg that he would by his holy Spirit work an effectual Change in us likewise, by instructing our Ignorance, and teaching us the saving Truths of his holy Gospel; that he would give us Zeal and Courage to profess them not only with our Lips but also in our Lives and Conversations, in Opposition to all the Threats or Inticements of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil; and that we may never be ashamed to confess the true Faith, or to appear in the Cause of Virtue and Religion, but be content, and even to rejoice to lose all we have, Life itself, if called to it, in Defence of and to maintain Justice and Truth.

In the Gospel of this Day Christ says : *If any Man love me he will keep my Word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our Abode with him.* This Promise is to be considered not only with regard to the Apostles, but likewise to all Christians, to every one who loves Christ, and keeps his Words, that is, obeys his Commandments ! Here we may observe that Christ speaks only of those who love him; for he will not visit with his Graces, or send his holy Spirit upon any other. We must then love God. But how ! by observing his Precepts. It is not enough to say we love God. Alas ! many say
this

this whose Actions are a Contradiction to their Words, nor are they to be believed unless they obey him. For he that truly loveth God will keep his Commandments. This is the Touchstone or Proof of what we say, and is a certain Rule by which we may judge whether we do love God or not: Nor are we to judge of our Love of God by some external Appearances only of Devotion and Piety. For that we have a true and sincere Love of God will best appear and be manifested by a constant uniform Observance of all the Precepts of his holy Law; by a sincere Zeal for his Honour and Glory, and a great Abhorrence of Sin and of every Thing that displeases him. To this must be joined, and indeed is the natural Produce of the Love of God, a sincere Love of our Neighbour, shewn by Acts of Charity to the Poor and Indigent, a peaceable Temper, forgiving Injuries, and wishing or doing ill to no one, patiently bearing all Afflictions and Misfortunes with an entire Resignation to the holy Will of God. These are Marks of the true Love of God, and if we have them, our blessed Saviour will make good his Promise, and will come with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and abide with us by his sanctifying Grace. Let us examine ourselves whether we thus love God, and wherein we find ourselves deficient, resolve to amend, and for that End earnestly beg the Assistance of this divine Spirit, that he would give us this Love, and thereby prepare our Hearts as a fit Habitation for

for him to dwell in, and to abide with us by his Grace here, that we may abide with him in Glory hereafter.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O holy Spirit ! Fire of divine Love ! Eternal Source of indeficient Light, by whose Light we see Light, and without which we walk in Darknes, and in the sad Night of Ignorance and Error ! O thou bright Light which illuminates all faithful Believers ; the Ray of ineffable Light proceeding from the Father and Son, equal, one true God with them. Come and visit me with thy Light ; illuminate my Soul, and make me see the Way of Truth, that guided by this thy Light I may walk therein and never lose myself among the Follies and Vanities of this World. O warm and inflame me with that sacred Fire which may burn up and consume all inordinate Affections to this World, or any Creature whatever, that my Heart may be inflamed and burn with the pure and chaste Love of thee.

O inexhaustible Fountain of divine Love ! fill my Heart and my Soul with a sincere and ardent Love of thee. Give me that Love which distastes all Things but thee, and which may make me truly pleasing to thee. O give me an active, zealous, fervent Love which may make me daily endeavour to love thee more and more. Ah my God ! I seek thee, and desire thee only. I seek thee for thyself alone,
and

and becauſe thou art infinitely good in thyſelf, and infinitely worthy to be loved.

There is nothing, deareſt Lord, which I would not do for thy Love. For Love of thee I ſet at nought all the alluring Pleaſures of a vain World. I contemn all ſinful Delights and Pleaſures, and every Thing that may be contrary to thee, O moſt pure, moſt amiable, and moſt deſirable Good ! O Holy Ghoſt, come and replenish my Heart, and kindle in me this Fire of divine Love. O Love ! O Fire ! O Flames ! Burn and conſume me in thee. Nothing can ſatisfy me but thee, nor will I ever wiſh or deſire any Thing but thee.

Whitſun-Monday.

ANtiently the whole Week of Pentecoſt was obſerved as holy Days, like *Eaſter Week*. And this Obſervance ſeems firſt to have been changed in the Beginning of the 10th Century, when in a Council held at *Ingleheim*, the Holidays of *Pentecoſt* were reduced to four : viz. *Pentecoſt-Sunday*, with the *Monday*, *Tueſday* and *Wedneſday* following. As the antient Cuſtom of adminiſtring ſolemn Baptiſm was only on the great Feaſts of *Eaſter* and *Pentecoſt*, and there being a ſmaller Number of Catecumens to be baptized at *Pentecoſt* than at *Eaſter*, by Reaſon of the ſhort Interval between the two Solemnities, it may be owing to

to this, that the Number of Holidays came to be retrenched. And as Ember-Days happen in *Whitfun* Week, we may suppose this to have been a further Reason why Pope Gregory IX. reduced the Feast of *Pentecost* to three Days, as *Wednesday*, which was before, the fourth, being Ember-Day and a Fast, did not seem to quadrate with the Solemnity of such a Feast or Holiday.

The GOSPEL. St. *John*, chap. iii. ver. 16.

For God so loved the World as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have Life everlasting. 17. For God sent not his Son into the World to judge the World, but that the World may be saved by him. 18. He that believeth in him is not judged. But he that doth not believe is already judged: Because he believeth not in the Name of the only begotten Son of God. 19. And this is the Judgment: Because the Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darknes rather than the Light: For their Works were evil. 20. For every one that doth Evil hateth the Light, and cometh not to the Light, that his Works may not be reprov'd. 21. But he that doth Truth cometh to the Light, that his Works may be made manifest, because they are done in God.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

Chriſt in this Goſpel tells *Nicodemus*, who came to him by Night, of the exceeding great Love of God to the World in ſending his only begotten Son into the World, that the World might be ſaved by him. In ſome Measure to comprehend this admirable Love of God to Man, we may conſider the ſad Condition the World was in before the coming of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt to redeem it. At our Creation God gave us a living and immortal Soul: He made us pure and upright, and having placed *Adam* in *Paradiſe*, deſigned him and all his Poſterity for eternal Happineſs. But alas! *Adam* ſoon loſt that Happineſs not only for himſelf but for all his Offspring, and we ſinning in him, were deprived of that Felicity: By Sin we became Enemies to God, were ſtripped of our beautiful Robe of Innocence, and condemned to an eternal Separation from him, and to ſuffer death both temporal and eternal. We were no longer Children of God, but Slaves of the Devil; no longer Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven, but, as guilty Malefactors, condemned to the Flames of Hell. We were driven out of the terreſtrial Paradiſe, that pleaſant Garden of *Eden*, and obliged to eat our Bread in the Sweat of our Brows, and to groan under all thoſe Miſeries and Afflictions which have overſpread the World, and which are the unhappy Effect of our Proto-Parent's Diſobedience.

once. Had our Miseries been confined to this Life, they would have been in some Measure supportable, but these, alas! are but Part, and the smallest Part of our Punishment, far greater Miseries being reserved for us hereafter. For after a few Years past over in Trouble and Sorrow, poor Man was doomed to sink into the eternal and far greater Woes of the next World, there to satisfy the divine Justice by an eternal, never-ending Punishment. This was the sad State of Mankind, and the miserable Condition the World was in, when God, out of his infinite Goodness, and according to his gracious Promise, sent his only Son into the World, that the World might be saved by him. From hence appears not only the great and inexpressible Love of God to us, and the Obligations we have to love him again, but also how much we ought to detest and abhor Sin, so offensive to God and so prejudicial to ourselves, an Atonement for which could no otherwise be made, than by the Son of God becoming Man for us.

From this Consideration of the sad State of Man, and the Mercy of God in freeing Man from that State, the devout Christian may carry his pious Reflections further, and consider the admirable Manner in which this great Work of Redemption was effected by the Son of God coming into the World. He did not redeem us, as *St. Peter* tells us, *Ep. i. chap. i. ver. 18.* by *corruptible Silver and Gold*, but by his own precious Blood. He

himself being our great High-Priest, the Sacrifice and Propitiation for our Sins. When God created us, he only spoke one Word, and we were made; and he could as easily have redeemed us. He needed only to have said as he did to the poor Leper in the Gospel: *I will be thou clean.* St. *Matt.* chap. viii. ver. 3. But though he could thus easily have redeemed us, he would not: To manifest the Greatness of his Love to us, he would send his only begotten Son into the World, who came and humbled himself to all the Infirmities of our human Nature. He became Man, like unto us in all Things, Sin only excepted, as that could have no Place in him who came to overthrow and destroy Sin: He was born of a poor and humble Virgin, and being born, after eight Days was circumcised and shed his Infant Blood for us: He lived a poor and laborious Life, and with an incomparable Goodness travelling up and down *Judea* and *Jerusalem*, preached his divine Doctrine, and worked many Miracles, and suffered great Hardships, Hunger, Thirst, and Fatigue, and at last was betrayed by one of his own Disciples into the Hands of his cruel Enemies, and by them crucified and put to a shameful and ignominious Death; and by dying finished that great and glorious Work he had undertaken, the Redemption of Mankind. Thus was Satisfaction made for our Sins, thus were we reconciled to our offended God and the World saved by Jesus Christ. Astonishing Instance

Instance of divine Love, justly deserving the warmest Return of Love and Gratitude!

This seems so natural a Consequence from any Reflection we make on the Love of God to Man, and from a Belief of the great Mystery of our Redemption, that it must seem hard to conceive there should be any Christian who is not affected with this Love of God, or who can refuse to love God who has done so much for him. Nevertheless the Conduct of too many verifies what our Saviour says further in the Gospel of this Day; *The Light is come into the World, and Men have loved Darkness rather than Light.* Wherein he plainly intimates this Ingratitude of Men to God. Jesus Christ is the Light of the World; he came into the World to search after Sinners who were gone astray, and had lost themselves in the Darkness of Error and Sin. He came to dissipate that Darkness, and to lead them from Error to Truth, from Sin to Virtue and Holiness. But too many refuse to hearken to this divine, eternal Word, and to be guided by this clear Light. They reject those Truths which discover the Irregularity of their Conduct, and chuse rather to abide in the Darkness of Sin to their own Destruction, than to follow the Maxims of his holy Gospel designed to save them. But to all such a severe Judgment is reserved, *because they believe not in the Name of the only begotten Son of God:* by which is to be understood, not having a practical Belief of the divine Doctrines he has delivered, and not

to let them be the Rule we walk by. This deserves a serious Attention, that we may not deceive ourselves with false Notions of Faith, saying, I believe in Jesus Christ, therefore I shall not be condemned. Do we believe? We do well so to do. *The Devils also believe and tremble.* S. Jac. chap. ii. ver. 19. But we must do more than barely believe; we must act conformable to our Belief, and prove our Faith by our Works. Really to believe in the Name of the Son of God, is to observe his holy Law, and to live as becomes Christians and his Disciples. Then we shall have no Reason to be afraid or ashamed; for says our blessed Lord, *He that doth Truth cometh to the Light that his Works may be manifest, because they are done in God.* Hence, as the Wise-Man affirms, *Prov. chap. xxviii.* The just Man is bold as a Lion, but the Sinner is always fearful; and he has Reason to fear that terrible Judgment which will one Day overtake him. He will not now believe or submit, that he may be saved, but he will then be forced to submit to the Consequences of it for all Eternity, without being able to fly from that Power which chastises him, or to extinguish that Light which makes him see the Justice and Equity of his Punishment.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus! Light of the World, who didst come into this World to save it, fill my Heart
and

and my Soul with a wholesome Fear of thee. O, make me so to believe thy sacred Truths that they may save, and not rise up in Judgment to condemn me. O Light which comes to illuminate our Darknes, illuminate me that I may behold and follow thee, for on thee depends the Happiness of those who receive thee by Faith, and that Faith by which they receive thee.

O my God, thou who hast loved me so much, ah! why do I so little love thee? Thou hast given thine only Son to me, and in thy beloved Son thou givest me all Things else, O give me thyself, give me thy holy Spirit that I may love thee, and that all I do may be a sincere Proof of my Love of thee.

Thou hast loved me, O my amiable and gracious Lord God, and may I love thee again! If Love requires Love, why should I not love thee? O why am I not inflamed with Love? My God, thou hast a Right to my Love, and I will love thee, and live to thee alone.

WHITSUN-TUESDAY

The GOSPEL. St. John, chap. x. ver. 1.

A MEN, Amen, I say to you, He that entereth not by the Door into the Sheepfold, but climbeth up another Way, the same is a Thief and a Robber. 2. But he that entereth by the Door, is the Shepherd of the Sheep. 3. To him the Porter openeth; and the Sheep hear his Voice; and he calleth his own Sheep by Name, and leadeth them out. 4. And when he has let out his own Sheep, he goeth before them; and the Sheep follow him, because they know his Voice. 5. But a Stranger they follow not, but fly from him. because they know not the Voice of Strangers. 6. This Proverb Jesus spoke to them, but they understood not what he spoke to them. 7. Jesus therefore said to them again, Amen, amen, I say unto you, I am the Door of the Sheep. 8. All others as many as have come, are Thieves and Robbers; and the Sheep heard them not. 9. I am the Door. By me if any Man enter in he shall be saved; and he shall go in and out, and shall find Pastures. 10. The Thief cometh not, but for to steal and to kill and to destroy. I am come that they may have Life, and may have it more abundantly.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

Christ here says of himself, *I am the Door of the Sheep. By me if any Man enter in he shall be saved.* This he said to the Pharisees calumniating him as an Imposter; and to his Disciples encouraging them to adhere to him. the same he says to all who desire to be saved and enjoy eternal Life. This is Life everlasting, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. St. *John*, chap. xvii. ver. 3. Nor is there any other Name under Heaven given to Men whereby they may be saved *Acts*, chap. iv. ver. 12. The Law was given by *Moses*, but Grace and Truth was brought by Jesus Christ. St. *John*, chap. i. ver. 17. He is the Son of God, sent into the World that the World might be saved by him, and that through Faith in his Name we might have Remission of our Sins. He is truly the Door of the Sheep, and no one cometh to the Father but by him, and to those who believe in his Name he hath given Power to become the Sons of God. St. *John*, chap. i. ver. 12. Here we may reflect and consider what a Happiness it is to be a Christian, and thereby enter into the Fold of Christ. Our blessed Lord further says, that those *who enter by him, shall go in and out, and shall find Pastures*; by which is understood those many and admirable Means of Grace and Salvation to be found in the Communion of his holy Catholic Church, as

the preaching his divine Word by Pastors Lawfully sent, whereby we learn our Duty, and are informed what we must do to be saved; the Benefit of holy Prayer by which we may obtain all that we stand in need of; for Christ has said, *Ask, and it shall be given to you.* St. Luke, chap. xi. ver. 9. He has also instituted the holy Sacraments as so many Conduits or Channels, by which he conveys his Grace to us. By the Sacrament of Baptism we are made Christians, Children of God, and Heirs of Heaven. By Confirmation we are rendered strong and confirmed in our Christian Catholic Faith. By the holy Eucharist we are fed with the true and real Body and Blood of Christ, to enable us to perform all our Christian Duties. By the Sacrament of Penance our Sins are forgiven us, and we are absolved on Earth to be pardoned in Heaven. By Extreme Unction, when sick and expiring, we are enabled to die well. These are excellent good Pastures to nourish and enrich our Souls, and which all those find who enter by the Door and are in Christ's Sheepfold, his holy Catholic Church. How much then are we obliged to him? what grateful Returns of Love and Duty ought we to make to him for this his Goodness to us?

Christ says also of his Sheep, that he calls them by Name, and leadeth them forth, and they follow him, because they know his Voice. As it is the Property of Christ's Sheep to hear and follow him, it is likewise a Proof of our being good Christians to obey God and to keep
his

his Commandments. *You are my Friends*, says our Saviour to his Apostles, *if you do the Things that I command you*. St. John, chap. xv. ver. 14. Nor must we flatter ourselves that we are Disciples of Jesus Christ, or are his Sheep, if we do not follow him by Obedience to what he requires of us. We call ourselves Christians, but it is not enough to call ourselves so, we must live as becomes Christians, following Christ our Shepherd wherever he leads us, and by a Conformity of Life and Manners shew that we truly belong to him. And here we may learn that great and necessary Duty of conforming to the Will of God in all Things. It is not the Business of the Sheep to direct their Shepherd, or to go where they please, but to follow him into those Pastures he shall conduct them to, and there to feed beside him, and to leave them when he calls them away, to go elsewhere. It is our Duty to submit to the Will of God in all Things, and to obey his Pleasure at all Times; for in this the Perfection of a Christian consists, and is the surest Proof he can give of being one of Christ's Sheep. The Will of God is a safe and sure Rule which we may securely follow at all Times and upon all Occasions: it is the only Rule we are to observe, as being the Will of our supreme Lord and Master, nor can we refuse without ceasing to belong to him. We may be said to conform ourselves to the Will of God, when we religiously observe what he commands us, and resignedly submit to his
good

good Pleaſure in all the Occurrences of Life
It is then that we imitate the Example Chriſt
has ſet us, and hear his Voice, and like good
Sheep follow him the true Shepherd of our Souls.

Another Property of Chriſt's Sheep is, that
they will not hear the Voice of a Stranger.
They follow not a Stranger, but fly from him,
becauſe they know not the Voice of Strangers.
The World, the Fleſh and the Devil are
Strangers or Enemies to Chriſt, and to all his
true Sheep, and we muſt look upon them as
ſuch to us, nor muſt we hear or follow them.
Our bleſſed Lord ſays, All who enter not by
the Door, but climb up another Way, are
Thieves and Robbers. Such are theſe Ene-
mies of our Souls, who endeavour to climb
up ſome ſecret Way, and ſeek to ſteal and to
deſtroy us. They lay a thouſand Snares and
Traps to deceive and catch us, and if we
hearken to their Voice and follow them we
are ruined. The Security of the Sheep is to
ſtick cloſe by their Shepherd, if they wander
away, they are in Danger of falling a Prey to
the Wolf watching and ready to devour them.
It is the ſame with thoſe who abandon Chriſt,
to hearken to the flattering Inſinuations of the
World, and ſuffer themſelves to be taken with
its Follies and Vanities. We muſt therefore
be upon our Guard, and not hearken to them :
Let us often think on the ſolemn Promiſes we
made at our Baptiſm, when we renounced to
Satan and all his Works ; to the Vanities of
the World, and the Delights of the Fleſh.

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May we remember, and consider this, and never hearken to the Voice of these Strangers; Enemies to Christ, and who seek our eternal Ruin.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus, Saviour of my Soul, thou true Shepherd, who dost take care of all who belong to thee! I acknowledge thee to be my only sure and safe Guide. I will follow thee, dear Lord, wherever thou goest, and I will obey thee in all Things. Ah my dear and adorable Master, divine Jesus, shall I pretend to be one of thy Sheep, and not hear thy Voice? Shall I call myself a Christian, and not conform myself to thy holy Will? May this be far from me! O thou sure and unerring Truth, who dost all Things for the best, may thy holy Will be done by me and all Creatures upon Earth, as it is done by the Blessed in Heaven.

O my God! may I never go astray from nor abandon thee to hearken to the Voice of Strangers and to follow them. Shall I forget my solemn Engagements to thee, to hunt after the vain and sinful Amusements of this World, the forbidden Delights of the Flesh, and thereby follow the Devil thine Enemy whom I have renounced to? rather let me die and be annihilated. O Jesus, my great Lord, let me never be so unfaithful to thee. I will esteem it the highest Honour and Happiness I can possess to belong to thee, I prefer it a thousand Times before all the Devil or this World
can

can give, and may I continue faithful to thee unto the last Moment of my Life. Amen, sweet Jesus ! Amen.

Trinity-Sunday.

THE Festival of the blessed *Trinity*, if considered with regard to its being the principal Object of all the solemn Worship used in the Church may be truly stiled the most antient of all the Feasts : But with Relation to the Solemnity of this Day, or having a particular Festival assigned to the Honour of the blessed *Trinity*, it is not so antient as several others in the Church are. It appears to have been celebrated first in some particular Churches a good while before its general Reception. Pope *Alexander III.* who governed the holy See towards the Middle of the 12th Age, says, that it was celebrated in some Churches on the Octave Day of *Pentecost*, and in others on the *Sunday* before *Advent*, but that the *Roman* Church did not keep any particular Feast in Honour of the blessed *Trinity*, because the whole Office of the Church contained nothing but the Praises of the blessed *Trinity*, and that every Psalm ended with Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. *Extrav. de Feriis C. quoniam* cited by Father *Thomassin*. *Durandus* also informs us, that this Festival was not admitted by several Churches, and by others observed at different Times. *Dur. L. 6. C. 114.* In the
Time

Time of Pope *John XXII.* it was received and observed at *Rome*, and has been since universally kept on the *Sunday* after *Pentecost*. The Reasons for instituting this Feast, and for observing it on this Day may be, 1st. to give the Faithful an Occasion solemnly to declare their true orthodox Faith in the public Profession of this great and sublime Mystery. 2. To render equal Honour, Praise and Adoration to all the three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, but one and the same God. 3. To signify that the Works of our Creation, Redemption and Sanctification are common to all the three, and that the same God created us, redeemed us and sanctified us.

The GOSPEL. St. *Matt.* chap. xxviii. ver. 18.

And Jesus coming, spoke to them saying : All Power is given to me in Heaven and in Earth. 19. Going, therefore, teach ye all Nations ; baptising them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. 20. Teaching them to observe all Things, whatsoever I have commanded you : And behold I am with you all Days, even to the Consummation of the World.

REFLECTIONS.

In this Gospel our blessed Lord gives Commission to his Apostles to baptise all Nations in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, an express Mention of the blessed *Trinity*, and a full Proof of the three divine Persons being one and equal God. This
sacred

sacred and adorable Mystery of three Persons, but one God, is not to be comprehended by human Reason, but is to be believed and adored by Faith and with Humility. A Mystery sufficiently manifested not only in the Gospel of this Day, but in many other Places of holy Scripture, whereby we are taught to adore an Unity in *Trinity*, and a *Trinity* in Unity; neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance: For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost; but of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost the Divinity is one, the Glory equal, and the Majesty co-eternal: What the Father is, that is the Son, and that is the Holy Ghost, one true and only God blessed for evermore. This is that sacred Mystery, the Sublimeness of which we may justly admire, and in the Contemplation of it, cry out with St. Paul, *O the Depth of the Riches, and of the Wisdom, and of the Knowledge of God. Rom. chap. xi. ver. 33.* In considering which we may also behold the wonderful Love of God to Man in the Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification of whom the whole sacred and undivided *Trinity* have co-operated. The eternal Father has created us, the eternal Son has redeemed us, and the eternal Spirit sanctifies us. But while we join with the Church in celebrating this Festival in Honour of the blessed *Trinity*, and profess our Faith and Belief of this great Mystery, we are to consider that it must not be an
empty,

empty, naked Faith or a bare Assent of the Mind to this great Truth: No. We must practically believe it, that is, with regard to those Duties which consequentially flow from a Belief of this holy Mystery. Thus, if we do really believe in God the Father, that he created us, and that he is our Father not only by Creation, but likewise by Adoption, having adopted us, as the Apostle says, *Ephes. chap. i. ver. 5. Thro' Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the Purpose of his Will.* It must necessarily follow from hence, that as our Father we owe to him the Duties of Love, Respect, and Obedience; and to be wanting in this is to shew that we are ungrateful as well as disobedient Children, unworthy of that truly paternal Love and Goodness he has for us. This Want of due Honour and Respect, God severely reprov'd the Jews for, by his Prophet *Malachi. chap. i. ver. 6.* where he says: *The Son honoureth the Father, and the Servant his Master: If then I be a Father, where is my Honour? And if I be a Master, where is my Fear, saith the Lord of Hosts?* It is to be feared the same Reproach may be justly made to many Christians who say they believe in God the Father, and profess themselves his Children; for can they with any Truth say they honour and respect him, who so daringly and openly abuse his sacred Name, who wilfully break his positive Laws, and commit those Crimes he has so expressly forbid? No, certainly. To shew ourselves

selfes his true Children, and that we do really believe him to be God the Father, not only as the first Person of the blessed *Trinity*, but also as our Father, we must love, and we must obey him. We have just Reason to love such a Father who so loves us, and by whose Goodness we are daily preserved in that Being he has given us ; nor have we less Reason to fear and obey him who is likewise our supreme Lord and Master, whose Power is infinite, and can do what he pleases, and who will highly reward those who love and obey him, and will severely punish those who do not.

The same practical Faith we are to have in God the Son, the second Person of the blessed *Trinity*, as we believe him to be the only begotten Son of God the Father, one and the same God with him, and to be likewise our Saviour and Redeemer, who became Man, and died upon a Cross to save us, the Duties we owe to him are Love and Gratitude ; to consider Sin as the Cause of his cruel Death and Sufferings, and not by a wilful living in Sin crucify him again, and trample under Foot his sacred Blood. Professing ourselves his Disciples and to believe in him, we must shew it by carefully observing what he has commanded, and regulate our Lives by the Maxims of that pure and holy Gospel he has given us ; the whole of which is contained in his divine Sermon on the Mount delivered in the vth, vith, and viith. Chapters of *St. Matthew*, and which Christians should often and seriously read over and reflect upon. There
we

we shall find an admirable Abridgment of all those practical Duties we are to observe, and which shew the Excellency and sublime Perfection of the Christian Law, how much it exceeds the *Mosaic* Institute. To the Observance of this Law we are bound by our professing to believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and unless we do endeavour carefully to observe it, we shall find it to be no Benefit to us to say, *Lord, Lord, have we not believed in thy Name?* For unless we do the Will of his Father who is in Heaven, he will say to us: *I never knew you, depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity.* St. *Matt.* chap. vii. ver. 23. This evidently proves that Faith alone will not save us, and that the Faith by which we must be saved is a Faith working by Charity in Jesus Christ, that is, a Faith which shews itself by good Works.

As we are to believe in God the Father, and in God the Son, so are we to believe in God the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the most blessed *Trinity*, proceeding from the Father and the Son, one and the same God with them, and to whom the Work of our Sanctification is appropriated. He is truly called the Sanctifier of our Souls, as the Distributor of all Graces, and the Author of all Holiness, communicating his spiritual Gifts and Graces to all those who love and serve him. Our Bodies are Temples consecrated to this holy and divine Spirit, according to St. *Pau'*, who in his 1 *Ep.* to the *Corinthians* chap. vi. says, *Know you not that your Members are the Temple*
of

of the Holy Ghost who is in you ? From whence we may learn how pure and holy our Lives ought to be, that we may not defile those Temples of the Holy Ghost, nor turn them into Dens of Thieves, by admitting the World, the Flesh, and the Devil to take up their Residence in our Hearts, if we do, we drive away this holy Spirit, who has himself positively declared that he will not dwell in a Body subject to Sin. *Sap. chap. i. ver. 4.* All mortal Sin, especially habitual mortal Sin is extremely odious and displeasing to him, and is called in Scripture, *Ephes. chap. iv. ver. 30.* a grieving the holy Spirit of God ; and what can those expect who do so, but to treasure up for themselves *Wrath against the Day of Wrath. Rom. chap. ii. ver. 5.* How much does this deserve our serious Consideration, that we may not deprive ourselves of the Grace of the Holy Ghost here, and of eternal Happiness hereafter ! It is this holy Spirit of God who continually calls upon us by his holy Inspirations to adorn the Catholic Christian Faith we profess, by a suitable Life of practical Piety and Holiness, and shall we be deaf, and wilfully refuse to hearken to his sweet Call ? Ah no, rather let us say with holy *Samuel, Speak, Lord, for thy Servant heareth. 1 Reg chap. iii. ver. 10.* May he so efficaciously speak to us, and we so readily hear and obey him, as by the Assistance of this holy Spirit of God we may fervently love and faithfully serve him in this World, to the End of our Lives, and befor ever happy in the next.

A S-

A S P I R A T I O N S.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. Glory be to thee, O God the Father, for the Immensity of thy Power which at first created all Things out of nothing, and still preserves them that they return not again to nothing. Glory be to thee, O God the Father, for thy great Goodness in making me after thine own Image and Likeness, and appointing all the rest of thy Creatures to serve me. Glory be to thee, O God the Father, for the Riches of thy Bounty which fills every Thing according to its Capacity; and for the Wisdom of thy Counsels which sweetly disposes and irresistibly governs the whole Frame of the World. Glory be to thee, O God the Father, for the eternal Charity where-with thou didst love us before the World began, and didst mercifully decree to redeem us by thy Son.

Glory be to thee, O God the Son, who to save us Sinners didst take upon thee the frail Nature of Man and becamest obedient even to the Death of the Cross, whereon thou didst offer thyself a Sacrifice for me and all Mankind. Glory be to thee, O God the Son, for thy glorious Resurrection and triumphant Ascension into Heaven; for sending the Holy Ghost to abide with thy Church for ever, and promising to be with us thyself to the End of the World.

Glory

Glory be to thee, O God the Holy Ghost, by whom was wrought the glorious Mystery of our Saviour's Incarnation. Glory be to thee, O God the Holy Ghost, the free Dispenser of all Graces and faithful Comforter in all Afflictions. Thou art the Pledge of our Adoption and Seal of our Salvation. Glory be to thee O God, and may all Creatures adore and praise thee for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the Beginning, from all Eternity, before all Ages, is now in Time, and ever shall be World without End. *Amen, Amen.*

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Corpus Christi Day.

AS Jesus Christ instituted the sacred Myf-
 tery of the blessed Eucharist the Day
 before his Passion, *Thursday* in holy Week
 has always been observed and kept in Me-
 mory of it; but as on that Day, and during
 the whole Week, the Devotions of the
 Church chiefly regard the sacred Passion of our
 Lord, and her Bishops and Ministers were much
 employed in the primitive Ages, in reconciling
 and admitting the public Penitents
 who were debared entering into the Church,
 and not admitted to attend the Celebration of
 the holy Myfteries during *Lent*, and in performing
 the *Mandatum*, or washing the feet
 of the Poor, it seemed expedient, as Pope
Urban IV. exprefles it in his Bull for the Infti-
 tution of this Feaft, to fet apart another Day
 in the Year to the Honour of Jesus Chrift
 truly present in the blessed Sacrament, and
 wherein might be fupplied, as it were, what
 could not be intirely complied with on Holy
Thursday: For which Reason the *Thursday* af-
 ter *Trinity-Sunday* was appointed as a folemn
 Festival in Honour of this f acred Myftery,
 wherein the Faithful may wholly apply them-
 felves to confider the Wonders of it, and
 preserve a greatful Memorial of our blessed
 Saviour's infinite Love and Goodnefs in the In-
 ftitution of this moft holy Sacrament, therein
 giving us his own true and real Body and Blood,
 under the Forms and Appearances of Bread
 and

and Wine, for the Food and Nourishment of our Souls.

This Feast began first to be celebrated in the Diocese of *Liege* in the Year 1230; and was afterwards extended to the whole Church by Pope *Urban IV.* Anno 1262, for the Reasons abovementiond, and also in Opposition to those who at that Time attacked and contradicted the antient and constant Faith of the Church of this divine Mystery. The first who called into Question and denied the real Presence of Jesus Christ in the holy *Eucharist* was *Bernardus*, Archdeacon of *Angiers*, who being won against by *Lanfrank* Archbishop of *Canterbury* and other holy and learned Men of that Time; and being condemned in several Councils, after having oftentimes retracted his Errors and relapsed, at length, died Catholic. His Heresy was revived in the Beginning of the sixteenth Century by *Luther*, *Calvin*, *Zuinglius* and other Sacramentarians, and maintained by their Followers at this Day: In Opposition to whom, and, to make some Atonement for their Abuses of this holy Sacrament, it is the Duty of Catholics to celebrate this Festival with all the Solemnity and Devotion possible; with a firm Belief of this sacred Mystery and with Gratitude and Acknowledgment to Jesus Christ for his Goodness and Mercy so conspicuous in the Institution of it.

The GOSPEL. St. John, chap. vi. ver. 56.

My Flesh is Meat indeed, and my Blood is Drink indeed. 57. He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood, abideth in me, and I in him. 58. As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father: So he that eateth me the same also shall live by me. 59. This is the Bread that came down from Heaven. Not as your Fathers did eat Manna, and are dead, He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

How wonderful is the Goodness and Bounty of Jesus! How conspicuous in the Institution of this divine Mystery! Being about to quit the World, and to finish that great Design of our Redemption for which he came down from Heaven, he would not leave us without giving us a Memorial of this his Goodness and Mercy, that we might thereby be daily put in mind of what he has done for us. And to this may be applied those Words of the Psalmist; *He hath made a Memory of his marvellous Works; he hath given Meat to them who fear him.* Psalm cx. ver. 4. This Memorial is his own most sacred Body and Blood which he has left us in the holy Sacrament of the Altar, and which he instituted the Night before he suffered, when being with his Disciples, and having celebrated the Passover, he took Bread and gave it to his Disciples, having first blessed it, and by his divine Power and ineffable Operation changed it into his own Body: In like Manner he gave them the Wine changed into his own Blood:

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He also gave them a Command to do as he did, and to celebrate this Sacrament, and by the Words of Consecration to change the Bread and Wine into his true and real Body and Blood: He likewise gave them Authority to confer the same Power on their Successors, that this holy Sacrament might continue in his Church for the Benefit of the Faithful to the End of the World.

That Jesus Christ does give us his real Body and Blood in the Eucharist we have, for a sufficient Proof, his own Words: *This is my Body*, giving the Bread which he had blest to his Disciples: *This is my Blood* giving them the Chalice; and in the Gospel of this Day he says: *My Flesh is Meat indeed, and my Blood is Drink indeed*. He also assured the Jews, that unless they eat his Flesh and drank his Blood, they should not have Life in them; and again, *He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood abideth in me and I in him*. After these plain and positive Assertions, who shall call into Question, or deny Jesus Christ to be truly and really present in the holy Eucharist? Let those who trust more to their own private Judgment and Senses, say with the unbelieving Jews: *How can this Man give us his Flesh to eat?* St. John, chap. vi. ver. 53. The faithful Christian will firmly believe the Truth of this sacred Mystery, and admire the great Love of his Redeemer in thus giving to him his own most holy Body and Blood to be the Food and Nourishment of his Soul to eternal Life; and will consider
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what grateful Returns he ought to make for the signal Favour. Christ may be truly said here to verify what he promised to his Apostles; *Behold I am with you all Days, even to the Consummation of the World.* St. Matt. chap. xxix. ver. 20. Let us endeavour to remain with him by reciprocal Returns of constant Love to him, whose Love to us was the Motive which induced him thus to give himself to us.

From considering the Reality of Christ's Presence in the holy Eucharist, our Thoughts will be naturally led to reflect on the Dignity of this Sacrament, and what it is to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. How grand the Sacrifices of the old Law were, may in part be conjectured from the many august Ceremonies which God himself commanded to be used in offering them, and from the Richness of the High-Priest's Ornaments, and from the Magnificence of the Jewish Temple, but they were only Types and Figures of the great Eucharistic Sacrifice of the new Law, and their Grandeur only a Shadow of the Greatness and Dignity of this holy Sacrament wherein Jesus Christ himself is both the Priest and Victim, and in which we partake, not of the Flesh of Sheep and Oxen, but of the life-giving Flesh of the immaculate Lamb of God Jesus Christ, his only Son. O, how great is the Dignity of this Sacrament where Christ himself is the Food which is eaten, and his sacred Blood the Drink which is taken! He, before whom the Cherubim prostrate themselves, the Seraphim

veil their Faces, and in whose Presence all the Powers of Heaven tremble; he gives and communicates himself to us under the familiar Forms and Appearances of Bread and Wine. With what awful and reverential Fear! with what Humility ought we to approach this sacred Table, this holy Altar? Should God condescend to send an Angel to us, how should we be able to receive him with due Reverence and Respect? Ah! what can we then do to receive, as we ought, God himself the Sovereign Lord of Angels, who comes to us in this most holy Sacrament? and, why? that we may enjoy eternal Life, and be for ever happy with him.

Let us further consider what our blessed Lord says in this Gospel; *He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood abideth in me, and I in him. He that eateth me, the same shall live by me.* He shall, by this divine Food, live a spiritual Life of Grace here, and an eternal Life of Glory hereafter. The Eucharist is a Fountain of all Grace, and Pledge of our future Glory and Happiness. The Manna which God gave to the Children of *Israel* in the Desert nourished them forty Years, but tho' they eat of that Bread they died; but the Eucharist is that Bread which comes down from Heaven, and he that eateth this Bread shall live for ever in Heaven. Happy Effect of this divine Food given to our Souls to sustain and nourish them in the Desert of this World, till we arrive at the heavenly *Canaan*, the true Land of Promise! How miserably

unthinking then are all those who slight this divine Food, and neglect to come to this holy Table, or who presume to come unprepared, and to receive unworthily? All such justly deserve to be excluded the Kingdom of God, and are like those Jews who murmured and complained of the Manna. *Our soul leatheth this light Meat.* Numb. chap. xxi. ver. 5. But as the unjust Murmurs of these Jews did not go unpunished, so all those who slight, and make but little Account of this divine Sacrament, or who abuse it by unworthy receiving, will be punished by God for it: Not so the serious and devout Christian. He will not only admire the great Love and Bounty of God manifested in this holy Mystery, but he will frequently have recourse to it, and devoutly prepare himself to receive it worthily, that he may daily grow in Grace, daily increase in the Love of God, and secure to himself eternal Life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

A S P I R A T I O N S.

O Jesus, my adorable Saviour! I firmly believe the Truth of this sacred Mystery. I believe it because thou hast said it, and thou art Truth itself, that Truth which cannot deceive. I believe therefore, O Jesus, that thou art truly present in this most holy Sacrament, true God and true Man: that thou dost give us thy true Body and Blood under the Forms and Appearances of Bread and Wine. O ineffable Bounty of thee, my dear Redeemer, sweet Jesus, Saviour of the World.

O God of my Life! O true Life and Happiness of my Soul! what Return can I make thee for this Love and Bounty? A thousand Times ten thousand Praises be given to thee by me, and by all Creatures. O that in every Moment of my Life I could produce those fervent Acts of Love wherewith the Blessed in Heaven continually Love and adore thee.

O my God! O God of infinite Power, of infinite Purity and Holiness! what am I that thou shouldst give thyself to me, poor, miserable and unworthy Sinner? O my dearest Jesus! since thou art pleased thus graciously to condescend, take from me all that may be displeasing to thee. Grant that I may appear in thy Presence all inflamed with Love and sincere Devotion, when I am to receive thee in this sacred and adorable Mystery. O beloved of my Soul, the End of all my Wishes and Desires! let me taste the Sweetness which thou hast laid up for all who love thee. Let me partake of it in this divine Banquet. O come, and give thyself unto me, and unite me so close to thee, as nothing may be able to separate me from thee. Amen, sweet Jesus, Amen,

F I N I S.



Soli Deo Gloria.

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